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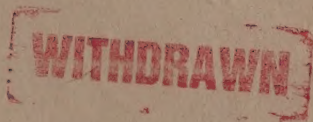


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Religion—Faith—The Church

*A Series of
Apologetic Discourses*

BY
CANON P. EINIG, D.D.



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RELIGION—FAITH—THE CHURCH

A SERIES OF APOLOGETIC DISCOURSES

I. THE NATURE AND TRUTH OF RELIGION

“What is your attitude towards religion?”—we often hear this question at the present day, for men are keenly interested in religious questions, the newspapers devote much space to discussing them, and no other topics have such power to awaken excitement at public and even political gatherings. On every side we hear allusions to sermons and lectures, and this is a good sign, since those were merely false prophets who maintained religion to be good for the human race as long as it was still in its infancy, but unnecessary when mankind had attained to full maturity. On the contrary, we have absolute proof that religion continues to be indispensable even after science, art and industry have reached their highest perfection, and again and again we realize the truth of Proudhon’s remark, that some point of religion ultimately underlies all other questions. At first sight this appears strange, but it is really so. We do not think it strange that a plant cannot live without sap, nor an animal without blood, and we admit that life would cease altogether unless the sun shone in the firmament. Yet religion is to the human heart precisely what the sap is to a plant, the blood to an animal, and the sun to animate existence. “But,” some one may say, “what do you mean by religion? May it not after all be merely a human invention?” We must answer these questions carefully.

1. Not even infidels can deny that every nation in every age has possessed some kind of religion, *i. e.*, a belief in one or many gods,

and a manifestation of this belief by means of oracles, prayers and sacrifices. The cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria and the hieroglyphics of Egypt contain religious records, whilst the earliest poetry of the Hindoos and Greeks is the outcome of religious feeling. Men's first attempts at artistic representation were intended to serve some religious end, and wherever we meet with religion, it is not something accidental and of secondary importance, but it occupies a prominent and significant position in national life. It is in fact co-eval with the human race itself, and the history of mankind is essentially the history of their religion. This is true of both civilized and uncivilized nations. From time to time some explorer has fancied that he has discovered a race devoid of all religion, but in every case subsequent research has proved this to be a mistake, and occasionally races said to have no religion have been found to possess more practical religious sense than some of those would-be explorers, who seem to have carried on their investigations in their own homes. Of course there are tribes amongst whom the knowledge of religion is very slightly developed or is terribly distorted, but still we everywhere find faith in a Supreme Being, a Great Spirit, and recognition of men's dependence upon the same. This is religion, though it may be, and often is, overgrown with foolish superstitions and repulsive forms of witchcraft. Plutarch, a pagan, was right when he said: "You may see a town without walls, but you will never discover a nation without God, without prayer and without sacrifice." Cicero, too, remarked with truth that no nation was so barbarous as not to need faith in a divinity. At the present time, when all the races on the face of the earth are more or less known, we can make the same assertion with even greater assurance.

What does this fact prove? We cannot suppose that every nation in every age has found religion an easy matter, gratifying to men's

natural feelings of pride and self-indulgence. It is impossible that religion should be nothing but the outcome of human imagination and ingenuity; it is indispensable to the mind and essential to every rational being. No laborious course of study is necessary to enable a man to know God and to recognize the importance of religion which is the link between himself and his Maker. It is enough for the most ignorant savage to possess sight and hearing and the use of reason. If, like Minutius Felix, a man raises his eyes and observes the sky above him, sparkling at night with countless stars, and traversed by day by the sun in all his majesty and glory; if he considers the alternation of light and darkness, of heat and cold, he is forced to ask who created all these things. In very truth "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth His handiwork." If on the other hand he fixes his gaze on the earth, and sees the beautiful flowers in spring, the rich fruits in summer and the glistening snow in winter,—if he looks at the sea and the rivers, and studies the marvels of animal and vegetable life, he will eventually perceive that he himself is appointed to rule over all the good things of nature, and—provided that he is not what the Wise Man calls "foolish beyond measure," he will involuntarily ask: "Who gave me all these gifts?" And if he has but a spark of honesty and gratitude in his character, he will fling himself down and exclaim: "It is God who hath made us and not we ourselves; He hath bestowed on us all that we have; to Him be praise and glory."—Even without the use of sight and hearing, it would be possible for a man to know God and possess some kind of religion, if he withdrew into the depths of his own consciousness. St. Augustine says very beautifully (*Conf. I, 10*): "I listened to God as one listens in the silence of his heart, and I should question my own existence rather than that of God."—Do you never hear Him?

has His voice never been audible when you were alone? has nothing ever told you that some action would be wrong? and if nevertheless you have performed it, have you felt no self-reproach? The voice that you heard was not your own but God's, and it was so clear and loud that you might more reasonably doubt your own existence than His. Like St. Augustine you are forced to admit: "I listened to God, as one listens in the silence of his heart."—Yes, all within and around us proclaims to us His existence and the truth and necessity of religion, and the utterance of our own heart is the one that we are least able to stifle. The human heart has been well compared with the mysterious pillar in Egypt, that stood, we are told, in the midst of the desert. As soon as the sun rose, and lighted up the pillar, wonderful sounds proceeded from its interior. The heart often seems lonely and abandoned, but no sooner does a ray from God's infinite glory fall upon it than the sweetest strains are called forth, and man is constrained to fall down in adoration crying: "O God, Thou art my God."

2. What do we understand by religion?—It is now less difficult to answer that question. D. F. Strauss declares sentiment and imagination to be the parents of religion, and it is a remarkable fact that very many non-Catholic theologians agree with him, infidel as he was. Schleiermacher considered it to be merely a matter of sentiment, a vague consciousness of our dependence. Ritschl pronounced it to be an affair of the imagination, striving to render us independent of this world. No, so far from this being true religion, it is absolutely exclusive of it. A morbid sort of piety is sometimes inclined to seek religion in our feelings, and especially in inward joy and consolation, but this too is a mistake. Our feelings and imagination, being under God's control, may be used by Him in the service of religion; and consolation is a precious gift, for which we

should thank Him when He bestows it; but these things do not constitute religion. St. Paul gives us the correct definition, when he calls it reasonable service. Religion concerns the reason, which tells us that there can be no effect without a cause, and that if the effect is perfect, the cause also must be perfect. Now I see many things, and belong myself to their number, which do not exist of themselves, but through something else, and ultimately there is one Thing, which does exist of itself and is the cause of all other things. I perceive everywhere regularity and order, and recognize the fact that the final cause of all things can be nothing but an intelligent and infinitely wise and good Spirit. In this way my reason teaches me that God is my Creator, and it goes on to show me that He is also my Lord and Master, for I am dependent upon Him, and owe Him thanks, and need His help; and that when He speaks I must listen; when He commands I must obey. Thus reason is the foundation of religion, and it is a remarkable fact that although men continually accuse the Catholic Church of undervaluing reason, it is precisely this Church which insists upon the capability of reason to know God by its own powers. Other religious bodies, while professing to attach greater importance to reason, deny it this ability, but at the last Council of the Church the rights of reason were declared to be an article of faith. Religion is reason; but it does not follow that our reason is capable of grasping all that religion teaches, although, even where it is incapable, its rights are still respected and the doctrines of religion are shown to be at least reasonable.

For instance, it is reasonable to have faith in God and in the mysteries that He has revealed. It is impossible to despise religion, for it is the reasonable service of God, but religion is not merely a matter of intellect, for in that case a theologian, who can

penetrate deeply into God's nature and discuss it eloquently, would have more religion than an ignorant man. A poor laborer, sweeping the streets in the early morning, may possess more real religion than a profound scholar. Religion is the reasonable service of God, as the apostle says. Now what faculty is there in man which worships, obeys and serves? It is the will, and therefore the human will must belong to God, that will which, being free, is God's most precious gift to man in the natural order. It behooves the will to act in conformity with God's will and to accept all that He orders. This surrender of the human will to God is a truly religious act, and when we examine it closely we find it to be an act of love, and so religion proves ultimately to be love of God. Such was our Saviour's teaching, when He bade us love God with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves, for this, as He said, is the whole law, the whole of religion. "Love God," exclaims St. Augustine, "and then do as thou wilt." He did not mean that of a man who loved God, nothing else was required, no church-going and no reception of the Sacraments; he meant that one who loved God would of his own accord do all that God commanded. All else would follow as a matter of course, for the one thing enjoined by religion is to love Him.

Sometimes religion is called the link between God and man, and it does indeed involve a mutual seeking and finding; man asks and God answers; man prays and God hears his prayer; man repents and God forgives; they are inseparable, but the best thing in man is his power to love, or, in other words, his religion, which is fundamentally very obvious and simple. A father takes his child into his arms and gazes into its eyes, seeing in them the reflection of himself; in the joy of his heart he exclaims: "My child, mine own!" and the little one responds with the one word "Father." God takes each

of us into His arms and calls us His children. Would that we never turned away from Him, refusing to listen to His voice! Let us at least now and then look into His eyes, especially when in the silence of our hearts He says: "My child, give Me thy heart." He has a right to what He asks; let us never refuse His request, but answer gladly: "Yes, my God and my Father, I will give Thee my heart." This is true religion, which will bring us peace and happiness in this life, and, in the world to come, eternal bliss.

II. RELIGION AND HONESTY OF LIFE

We are told how St. Augustine, one of the greatest men who ever lived, stood once by the seashore watching the waves and the sun gradually sinking below the horizon. Overwhelmed by the beauties of nature he exclaimed: "O ocean, sun and nature, can ye give me peace?" But he received no answer, only the waves continued to rise and fall, as if suggesting that all earthly things, like them, were unstable and incapable of affording peace to the soul. St. Augustine raised his eyes to the cloudless heavens, and watched the stars shining in the firmament, and again he asked whether peace were to be found in their midst, and they seemed to reply that they, like all the bright and fair things of nature, must fade away after a few hours' radiance, and that true peace must be sought elsewhere. On the wings of thought the Saint rose to a still greater height, and continued his quest for peace among the glorious spirits around the throne of God, only to be told that they, too, were creatures, and that nothing created, not even the most exalted knowledge and art, could satisfy the craving of his soul. At last he turned to God, and there found what he desired, and, falling down in adoration exclaimed: "O Lord, Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts can find no rest, until they rest in Thee" (Conf., x, 6; iv, 10).

What St. Augustine here records of himself is more or less the experience of us all. Countless voices around us and one clear voice within us cry unceasingly: "Thou dost belong to God, and in Him alone canst thou find peace." Yes, we belong to God, and are united with Him most closely by the bond of faith, which prompts us to keep His Commandments. Here we have the very

essence of religion and it is something quite obvious and natural. None of us doubt this truth; your presence here and your desire to hear God's word are evidence of your faith, but you know well enough that all men are not of the same mind. Many will tell you that they see no use in going to church, or in listening to sermons, or in practicing religion. They commit no flagrant sins; they are not thieves or murderers, and, in their opinion, they need no religion, and God will be satisfied if they lead decent, honest lives. Possibly this might be true, if they really led decent, honest lives, but it is impossible to do this without the aid of religion—we must be quite clear on this point:—without religion there can be no honesty and decency of life, and consequently religion is not only of very great assistance in leading a moral life, but it is the one and only foundation of morality.

1. What do we mean by honesty? Who is honest? We call a man honest who acts straightforwardly. Now it is absolutely certain that God exists, and that from Him we receive all that we have and are, and that without God our hearts can never enjoy peace. It is also just and right that we should acknowledge this God to be our Lord and Master, honoring Him and giving Him thanks. It is true beyond all question that this same God has spoken to us through the Patriarchs and Prophets, and lastly through His Son, and that He can neither lie nor deceive; therefore it is our bounden duty to believe His words and to obey His Commandments. It may be beyond our comprehension, but it is nevertheless true, that God made us His children and Himself became our Father in virtue of the race which His Son obtained for us by His Passion and death. Consequently God has a perfect right to claim our reverence. It is also true that Jesus Christ founded a Church, and said to those appointed to rule it: "He

that heareth you, heareth me.” Must we not therefore honor and love this holy Church as our mother? How can any one dare to assert that he needs no religion, provided that he leads a good life? How is it possible for him to lead a good life without religion? Even if he commits no flagrant sins, he is obviously neglecting his paramount and most sacred duty, and is a sinner, though he may not kill or steal. A thief robs his neighbor of his property and a murderer deprives him of his life, and these are undoubtedly grievous sins; but a man who has no religion, who refuses to recognize God and despises His Commandments, is actually robbing the Infinite God of the honor that is His due, and this must be a far more grievous offence. It is an act of treason against God, and this is why, when the Commandments were given on Mount Sinai, amidst thunder and lightning, He began by ordering men to serve and reverence Himself, so that the Commandments regarding our duty towards God take precedence of those regarding our duty towards our fellowmen. How then can it be possible to lead a good life and yet disobey the solemn injunction: “I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods beside Me?” It is absurd even to speak of a good life without God and religion.

2. An upright man's first duty is towards God, and his loyalty to this duty is the best guarantee that he will fulfil his other duties, so that religion is the best and firmest foundation of all uprightness. The earliest Christian authors do not hesitate to refer to the good lives of Christians as evidence of the truth of their religion. St. Justin, Martyr, appealed to the pagans in these words: “Since we have been the servants of the one true God, we have become different men. We used to abandon ourselves to riotous living, but now are temperate and sober. Formerly we refrained from no means of acquiring wealth, but now we share our pos-

sessions with the needy. Formerly we hated and slew one another, but now we love one another, and pray even for our enemies. All this is the result of our religion" (Apol., i, 14).

Tertullian exclaimed to the pagans of his own day: "The prisons are always full of people from your midst, and you sit in judgment on the Christians, but when were you ever able to convict a Christian of theft, adultery or murder? We are condemned simply as Christians, and if we could be convicted of any other offence, we should no longer be true Christians. Even your financiers owe a debt of gratitude to the Christians for paying their taxes honestly for conscience's sake" (Apol., 44).

These champions of Christianity were right, and we need not wonder that they were so, since, wherever true religion and genuine Christianity prevail, it is comparatively easy to avoid evil and to practice virtue. If the tempter assails you, you will remember that God sees you, and will punish you if you sin, and this thought will help you to gain the victory. If some one offends you, and you are roused to anger, you will call to mind the Lord's words: "Vengeance is mine," and if this does not suffice, you will look at the Crucifix and think how our Saviour said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and then you will be able to forgive your enemy. When troubles and poverty incline you to lose courage, you must remember Heaven, where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and should you still be weighed down with sorrow, turn to the crib at Bethlehem, and consider how your God became poor and outwardly insignificant for your sake. Perhaps you have fallen into sin, and your conscience gives you no rest, and within you there is a voice that bids you rely on God's mercy and have recourse to the tribunal that He in His goodness has established, and His minister will pronounce the words of absolu-

tion over you, so that you may depart comforted and relieved of your burden. Then you can approach the altar and partake of the food of the strong, that will enable you to walk manfully on the path of virtue. It is true of course that we live in a wicked world, and are but weak mortals, yet is it not much easier for us Christians to do our duty than for others? Would it not be astounding if we did not lead better lives than the rest of mankind? A statistician tells us that it is possible to prove that crime increases where there is no religion; of every hundred prisoners, fifty are absolutely indifferent to religion, forty are infidels, and only ten are practical Christians. We have no desire to praise ourselves, but we cannot help saying that we Christians, and especially we Catholics, must inevitably be more moral, since others have not such powerful motives and effectual means for overcoming their own weakness and practicing heroic virtues.

3. Religion is the firmest foundation, or rather the sole foundation of morality. Even Cicero, a pagan, knew this, for he said: "I do not think that loyalty and faith and human society and the idea of justice could continue to exist, if piety and religion disappeared" (Cic. de nat. deor., i, 2). Nothing good can exist without religion, nor is this surprising, when men have trampled their most sacred obligations under foot. Those devoid of religion need not necessarily be thieves or murderers; there are many other things that they ought not to be; and there is much good which those who have no religion are unable to accomplish. We are bound to obey our parents, to lead moral lives, to be honest in business, charitable to the poor, modest in prosperity, patient in adversity:—can we do all this without the aid of religion? What will become of us when our passions run riot, and our interests clash with our duties? Will the voice of reason suffice to keep us

on the right path? We are told that it behooves us to do right for its own sake, and to practice virtue because it is beautiful. This is all very well, but in the ears of most people it is but a specious argument, incapable of suppressing a sinful desire or of deterring a man from sin. Any one with the slightest knowledge of human nature knows that this is true, and Napoleon I., who possessed a profound insight into the characters of men, remarked that but for the restraint imposed by religion, human beings would kill one another for the sake of a juicy pear or a pretty woman. What would become of morality without religion? You have all heard of the modern, up-to-date kind of morality, and Nietzsche, who is considered by his admirers to have been the greatest philosopher who ever lived, was filled with a perfectly diabolical hatred of all religion and especially of Christianity. He set to work to preach a new form of morality, that of the superman, totally unlike the doctrines of Christ. The first principle of Nietzsche's teaching is that everything is lawful; humility must give way to pride, self-denial to self-indulgence. The weak should be trampled down, not pitied, and the superman alone should reign supreme. This is the new morality, the exaltation of brute force, or, as its founder said, of the blonde beast. Surely these are terrible doctrines, and we may well prefer to abide by the teaching of Bethlehem and Calvary, which inculcates charity and compassion.

My Brethren, love and respect religion, and teach your children to do the same. Remember that it is the one foundation of all goodness, and that no one can lead a really good life without the support of religion, whilst it is equally impossible for religion to be complete unless it manifests itself in a moral life. The first three Commandments refer to God Himself, and our duty towards Him, but there are seven others no less important. A religion

that did not result in goodness of life would be no true religion at all; it would be, as it were, a tree devoid of leaves, blossoms and fruit, whose root was rotten or whose sap had ceased to flow. St. James goes so far as to say: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (i, 26). Thus the Apostle condemns all profession of religion if one virtue fails to be cultivated, and a religion without any results would not be worth anything. No greater disgrace can be imagined than for unbelievers to be able to say to us: "These pious people are no better than we are." They are only too prone to criticize our works and judge our religion by our actions. This may not be altogether fair, but it is frequently done, and, therefore, it behooves us not only to have our religion, but to live in accordance with its precepts. We ought to be patient, gentle, honest, kind and charitable, remembering how St. James bids us be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

III. INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGION

Lessing represents Nathan the Wise as telling the story of a man in the Far East who owned a ring of priceless worth, containing an opal, that flashed with exquisite colors and was capable of making its owner pleasing to God and man. When he was on his deathbed he could not decide to which of his three sons to bequeath the ring, since he loved them all equally. Consequently, he ordered a jeweller to make him two other rings, precisely similar to that which had the miraculous power, and then each son received a ring, and each believed his own to be the original. Nathan concludes the story by saying that it was almost as impossible to prove which was the original ring as it is for us now to show which is the true Faith. The precious ring that makes men pleasing to God is religion, but which religion? There are more than one, and many people feel inclined to agree with Nathan, and say that the truth cannot be ascertained. What then is the good of troubling about it? Is it not better to be indifferent to all religions? Probably all are good, and the best course is to adhere to the religion in which one happens to be born. Leave others to work out their salvation and to believe what they choose; it behooves us to be tolerant. We hear such language almost every day, but is it justifiable? No, it is wrong, thoroughly wrong, and it is strange that Lessing did not perceive the folly of his story of the three rings, since as a rule he was ready enough to expose mercilessly the follies of others. You are well aware that there is only one true religion, and that this fact is perfectly capable of demonstration; therefore to be indifferent to it is sheer folly and sin, but in condemning indifference to religion we are far from inculcating intolerance towards those of

another faith. You know that it is our duty to be friendly and tolerant towards others, no matter what religion they profess, and, what is more, we should be charitable. You know the story of the Good Samaritan, who saw a man professing another faith lying wounded and half dead by the wayside, and he was moved with compassion, and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. Our religion teaches us to act thus; but to-day we are concerned with facts, not with individuals, and we may safely assert that indifference to religion is both foolish and sinful.

1. You have doubtless noticed how intolerant some people are, especially the declared enemies of religion. The very mention of religion is enough to excite them, and the sight of a cassock is to them like a red rag to a bull. They are far from indifferent, and others, too, who delight in talking about their own toleration, are often by no means indifferent. It often happens that in society Protestants and apostate Catholics abuse the Church, her organization and her ministers, knowing all the time that you are Catholics. They think that you ought to agree with them, or at least to say nothing, and if you protest, you are regarded as intolerant. Some scoffer or infidel may speak against our Lord and His blessed Mother, and expects you to listen in silence. Another perhaps tries to enlighten you, and to show that you are descended from apes, and that there never was a God who created all things. If you remonstrate, you are condemned as narrow-minded, and it is taken for granted that you ought to accept all these theories with respect.

Toleration, in the usual meaning of the word, seems to require the friends of religion to keep silence on all occasions, whilst its enemies are at liberty to say what they like, to utter abuse and falsehoods, and to despise what we hold sacred. Is not this

really intolerance? Is there not a contradiction here? Yes, indeed, for the truth is that indifference is permissible on every other subject, but not on matters of religion. After all, it is quite natural that this should be so. Religion touches us too closely and is too intimately connected with our innermost being and our essential interests for us ever to be really indifferent to it. Men are either the friends or the foes of religion, but few are indifferent to it, and those few are as a rule very simple, ignorant souls, amongst whom we must refuse to be numbered. How can any one assert that all religions are true and equally good? Can it really be the same thing to believe in many gods and in one? to maintain and to deny the Divinity of Christ? to look upon the Pope as Anti-Christ and to venerate him as the Vicar of Christ, to whom our Lord entrusted His sheep and lambs? to believe that Christ's Body and Blood are really present in the consecrated Host and Chalice, and to think that there is nothing present but bread and wine? To any one who can see no differences here, black and white, light and darkness, truth and falsehood must all be identical. We are forced to wonder how men can be so blind. If you ask for butter in a shop, and they give you margarine, you are dissatisfied. If you ask for wine, and receive some sort of concoction with no wine in it, you are angry. If some one who owes you money, pays you in bad coins, is it all the same to you? No, you are not so foolish; it is only in matters of religion that we are expected to be stupid enough to believe that all religions are equally good. But people tell us, like Nathan in the story, that it cannot be proved which is the genuine thing. Possibly all religions may not be equally good. But who, they say, is to prove which is the best and truest religion?

It may not always be easy for each individual to distinguish truth and error. Some people are not sufficiently educated; others have

grown up in the midst of prejudices, which to some extent obscure their judgment; but is it really impossible to discriminate between the true religion and its spurious imitations? No, we have an infallible means of discrimination. We see the difference between natural and artificial flowers, however skilfully the latter may be made, and surely we are capable of distinguishing the pure gold of the true religion, the fragrant flower of faith, from creeds devised by mere mortals! On all sides we hear of the achievements of the human intellect, and the enemies of religion maintain that the powers of the mind know no limitation, only when religion is mentioned they protest that it is impossible to discover the truth. They say that we can know everything except the one thing most natural and indispensable, the one thing for which our hearts crave in their quest of happiness, the one thing without which we can have peace neither in this world nor the next. Those who say that none can discover the genuine ring, or, in other words, the true religion, have indeed a poor opinion of human nature, though they profess in their folly to exalt it above God and His revelation. If we cannot know the true religion, we cannot know anything, and we shall end by doubting all truths, and finally agree with Nietzsche's dogma "Nothing is true." When once this has been accepted, it is but a step to the further horrible doctrine: "All is permissible," and man sinks to the level of the beasts. In such a case as this, how true are the Psalmist's words: "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them" (Ps., xlviii, 13).

2. Indifference to religion is opposed to all reason, and involves the utmost degradation of human nature, besides being an outrageous insult to God. In his treatise on the expediency of faith (De utilitate cred. 16) St. Augustine says: "If there is a God and a

Divine Providence that cares for men, and if God desires man to seek and find Him, we may be quite sure that He has provided means whereby man may know where and how to discover Him."

If we are anxious that strangers in our midst may not lose their way, we set up signposts at every spot where they could go astray, first on the highroads, then on the lanes, and finally on the field-paths, which may be thought short cuts. Our infinitely good and merciful God acts in the same way and He could not do otherwise. In the first place, our reason tells us that there is but one God, and that it is our duty to serve Him. This is the first signpost. Next God reveals Himself to men through His wonderful works, that He alone could accomplish, and also through His miracles; and later on, He shows us His beloved Son, and bids us hear Him. This is the second signpost, and we must follow its indication, and turn neither to the right nor to the left, for neither Judaism nor any sect that denies our Lord's Divinity is the true faith. Further on we find a third signpost, on which Christ has written in large and legible letters: "He that heareth you, heareth me"; and "Thou art Peter, the Rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church." Thus wherever Peter is and his successor, the Pope, and wherever there are bishops who have succeeded the Apostles, there is the true Church; any path that diverges from it will lead us astray.

God has given us these indications, and we cannot say that He has failed to make them clear. But nevertheless He has done more, and has bestowed upon us sacred records and an infallible teaching authority, and for thirty-three years He dwelt among us, teaching us the right way, the true religion, both by word and example. In His childhood He taught children, in His youth He taught the young, and on the Cross He died for His religion. He could have done no more, nor could He have shown us more

clearly which was the true faith that He so ardently desired us to learn and practice. How can man, an insignificant creature, pretend to know better? He fancies that it does not matter which religion we profess, since all are equally good, and none can be proved more true than the rest. Such statements are not only foolish—they are very sinful and blasphemous, and their form of blasphemy is particularly repulsive and insulting to God. A man who defies God, and, like Lucifer, deliberately refuses to serve Him, is an abomination; but the man who is indifferent to religion is, if possible, still worse. He knows what God has said and done, and how much importance He sets upon the true faith, but still this man cares nothing, and in his pride and cold disdain despises his Maker. Is this not a fearful sin? Does it not seem as if declared enmity to Almighty God and religion were better than such indifference? Pilate was indifferent; when Christ said: "I came into the world that I should give testimony to the truth; every one that is of the truth, heareth My voice," Pilate only shrugged his shoulders and asked: "What is truth?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he turned to the Jews, saying: "I find no cause in Him," and proceeded to release Barrabbas, a robber and murderer, and condemned Jesus to be crucified. Pilate was a coward, like every man who professes indifference to religion, and who asks: "What is truth?" though he knows it perfectly well. He has no particular fault to find with the truth; he is quite aware that Christianity is the most Divine and beautiful thing on earth, and nevertheless he turns away from it, and demands toleration for every form of error, abandoning Catholicism, the one true religion, to the ridicule and scorn of its enemies, just as Pilate freed Barrabbas, and allowed the Son of God to be crucified!

Indifference is worse than folly,—it is a crime against which we

must be on our guard; it begins with coldness, and when a man's limbs grow cold and lifeless, it is a bad sign; but when the cold reaches the heart death is certain. Religious indifference is the icy coldness of death in the heart; let us resolve to avoid it. Let us remember how our Saviour came down from Heaven to earth to seek us, His sheep, that had gone astray, and to show us the right road to Heaven. He came down one winter's night, and for thirty-three years He dwelt among men, setting them an example, but how cold were their hearts! Let us pray earnestly that He may banish all coldness and indifference from our hearts and inspire them with the fire of His love, so that we may always cling with ardent devotion to Him, His truth and His holy Church, who is the guardian and teacher of truth. Amen.

IV. THE MEANING AND POSSIBILITY OF REVELATION

Supposing a schoolboy set to work to do his sums, entirely ignoring all the rules of arithmetic, and maintaining that it did not matter whether twice two were four or five, we should all think him very stupid. If a child pretended to love its father, but at the same time fancied itself free to disregard that father's wishes, we should declare that child both naughty and foolish. Now every one who says: "I believe in God, but it does not matter which religion I adopt, behaves just like the child and the schoolboy of whom I have spoken. Religion is the connecting link between God and man, and as there is only one God, so there can be but one true religion. This ring of priceless worth, as Lessing calls it, can easily be proved genuine, for God Himself has revealed its authenticity most clearly.

What then is this religion? Theoretically two things are possible. A child knows by instinct its duty towards its father; but the father may also explicitly exact respect from the child. In the same way, by means of intellect alone man knows that he is bound to love and honor God; but God may also explicitly require of him this love and homage, and may further make known to him things which he could not find out for himself, nor learn from other men. Now God has dealt thus with us, and the religion that He has revealed is the one true religion. We have to consider to day the nature and possibility of revelation.

I. St. Paul tells us that God inhabiteth light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen nor can see (1 Tim., vi, 16), but nevertheless He reveals Himself to us, when He comes forth and makes us realise

His presence. He does this first through His creatures; the sun, moon and stars, the rain and sunshine, all the beautiful things that He has made, the life of individuals and the destiny of nations, all that takes place on earth and the voice of conscience—all these are revelations of God, and it is of them that the Apostle says: "The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also and divinity" (Rom., i, 10). As a rule, however, we apply the word "revelation" less to things created than to another method whereby God makes Himself known. In Paradise He spoke to Adam bidding him not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and after the fall He said to him: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread", and again to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel".

To Abraham He promised to make him the ancestor of a great nation, and said: "I will bless thee and multiply thy seed . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." To Moses He spoke from the burning bush, bidding him lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God promised to establish for ever the throne of David's descendant. There are many other passages in the Old Testament in which we read that God spoke directly to men, not merely indirectly through creatures. Sometimes He used human language, sometimes signs, sometimes dreams, sometimes interior illumination, but always He spoke directly, and the truths revealed were partly such as men could already know, but partly related to things of which they could have no knowledge at all, for instance the coming of a future Redeemer. God's revelation in the Old Testament consisted of instructions, commandments,

threats and promises, but it was His will to reveal Himself more fully than by means of words and signs, and so one of the Divine Persons, the eternal, uncreated Word, assumed our nature and came down to earth to teach us. In the crib He spoke, though His language was inarticulate, to the shepherds and the wise men; later on He addressed the doctors in the Temple, the multitudes on the mountains, and His disciples in the stillness of the country. Everywhere He taught men the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, disclosing to them the fullness of the Godhead, whilst He dwelt among them as a man, as a brother among brethren, as a friend among friends. Do not overlook the fact that our Lord and Saviour could not possibly be satisfied with merely instructing us, for instruction alone would have availed nothing. In addition to the revelation made to us, He gives us grace to raise our mind and will, and our whole nature and being to His own Divine order, thus enabling us to attain to the lofty, supernatural goal that God sets before us. Christ founded His Church and made her the guardian of the Sacraments, in order thereby to give us His grace and reveal to us His truth. This is the second stage of revelation, and it leads up to the third and last, which we shall not enjoy in this life, but in the world to come, where we shall see God face to face, as He really is. This will be the climax and completion of the Divine revelation, the height of Divine wisdom, and our final end. This is the revelation of which St. Paul says that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man (1 Cor., ii, 19). We cannot understand this, my brethren, and stand lost in amazement before it; yet this is revelation;—an elaborate system designed for man's salvation, consisting of a gradual method of instruction, begun in Paradise and culminating in the Beatific Vision, and it is organized by God

Himself, and not effected merely through creatures and the forces of nature.

2. But is this within the limits of possibility? We must be clear on this point. It is impossible for us of ourselves to attain to such knowledge, nor can any other creature, however exalted, impart it to us; nor was God in any way bound to give us such a revelation; it is in fact called supernatural for this very reason. But is a revelation possible? Rationalists who reject all revelation and rely solely on the human intelligence, say that Divine revelation is utterly impossible; but we know that it not only is possible, but actual. Supernatural revelation is indeed possible, and the Vatican Council declared that whoever denied this fact, was no longer a Christian. Why should it be impossible? God created our ears, that we might hear the voices of others, and why should He not speak to us Himself? He fashioned our tongues, with which we instruct others, and why should He be unable to communicate with us? Even when we talk with our fellow-men, who is it who really comes into closest contact with our minds? Men's words are but waves of sound, that strike our ears, it is really God who instructs us, and why should He not be able to speak to us without having recourse to human language? Why should He not have means of proving with absolute certainty, that it is He and none other whose voice we hear?—Or is perhaps man's intelligence incapable of learning from God? Is it so poor and wretched as never to be taught anything by Him? It certainly possesses an irresistible craving for truth, and in the sphere of nature acknowledges no limitations. The Rationalists admit that this is the case, and argue that as nothing is beyond the scope of the human intellect, there is no need for a Divine illumination. Their argument is foolish, and they might as well say that, as nothing is beyond

the scope of the human intellect, there is no need for any education imparted by man. If this were so, we should not be greatly superior to beasts. Surely God must have it in His power to instruct us more rapidly and more convincingly regarding the things which are too high for us, now that we are entangled with earthly affairs, yet which it is of the utmost importance for us to know, since they concern God Himself and our eternal salvation. Let no one maintain that to receive instruction of this sort is derogatory to human intelligence. At that rate it would be contrary to the nature of a wild rose, and derogatory to it, should another rose be grafted on to it, to improve its blossoms. It would be derogatory to a child and contrary to his nature, should his mother teach him facts that he did not already know. What God does, can never be contrary to human nature; it can only add dignity to the same. Even in the sphere of nature this is true, but it is still more true in the supernatural. It is false to say that human reason has no limitations, although it may have none in matters that fall within the scope of natural wisdom. We are certain that a God of infinite power and wisdom exists, and therefore there must be a Divine truth beyond our natural powers to attain. It is not possible to recognize the whole life of the Godhead in His creatures, for there are mysteries that we cannot fathom, such as the Trinity in unity, the Incarnation and the marvellous presence of the incarnate Son of God in His Sacrament. These are the profound mysteries of the Godhead, which none save the spirit of God can penetrate; these constitute the mystical life of which our Saviour said that none could know it except the Father and the Son and those to whom the Son would reveal it. Once a created spirit, the most exalted that ever came into being, presumed to search out these mysteries by his own strength;

he desired to be as God, and in that very moment he ceased to be an angel of light. We cannot of ourselves fathom these wonderful truths, but God has revealed them to us. The lowly shepherds and faithful wise men were privileged to see the Holy Child, whilst Herod and the Pharisees in their pride and arrogance failed to find Him. If only we are humble, it will not be hard for us to believe in a Divine revelation, and in all that it contains, and thus we shall be true Christians.

V. THE ADVANTAGE AND NECESSITY OF REVELATION

“The chief steward tasted the water made wine.” These words occur in the story of the marriage in Cana of Galilee. We can picture the steward’s astonishment, and fancy that we hear him exclaim: “What has happened? I know the taste of water and of wine, and what I have just drunk is undoubtedly wine.” My Brethren, what man can find out for himself and what he is taught by God, stand in the same relation to one another as water and wine. In our astonishment we ask whether God has really spoken to us, whether He is able to give us this wine. But He has indeed done so; as the Apostle says: “God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets; last of all in these days hath spoken to us by His Son” (Hebr., i, 1, 2). But here arises another question. We can perceive many wonderful things for ourselves by the light of reason; why then did God Himself instruct us? and was there any need for such a revelation? We cannot suppose that at the marriage feast either the chief steward or anyone else asked why they should have wine, since they could quench their thirst with water. No doubt they all looked gratefully at our Saviour, who had been so kind as to supply them with wine, and they accepted His gift with thankful hearts. This is how we ought to receive Divine Revelation. There are two kinds of truths: those that we can discover for ourselves and those that are too profound for us, being mysteries hidden in the Godhead. God has given us instruction regarding both kinds—was this necessary?

1. God loves man with a peculiar love, desiring to be his Father and not merely his Creator. He wished to communicate to man

His own life and Divine nature, although this cannot be accomplished perfectly in this world. "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John, iii, 2); as He is; *i. e.*, no longer "through a glass," but face to face, no longer "in part," but fully, even as we are known; and our hearts will delight in the possession of God, whereas now no eye hath seen and no ear hath heard the good things that He has in reserve for us. Our joy will be complete in Heaven, and our present life only faintly represents the life that is to come. Even here we require to share in the supernatural and Divine gifts which we shall possess fully in the next world; we need, as it were, a foretaste of their joys, that we may cooperate in securing complete possession of them, for we are already children of God. One thing, therefore, is clear; unless God made known to us the supernatural goal for which He destined us, and unless He revealed Himself by emerging from the darkness that veils Him from our sight, we could not have any conception of the glories awaiting us; therefore a revelation was indispensable. God must inevitably show us, as far as we are able to comprehend them, the good things that He has prepared for us. As human beings we did not require to know His secrets, but as children of God we could not dispense with this knowledge, and surely we all desire to be His children; He Himself wishes to be our Father. How great is our dignity and happiness! It doth not yet appear what we shall be; our sight is still too dim for us to behold the glory that awaits us, and there are mysteries which we must accept with faith and gratitude. Picture to yourselves a man born blind, whom I invite to take a walk with me in the springtime. I am delighted with all that I see, but he perceives nothing, until, wishing him to

share my rapture, I say to him: "Do you not notice the fragrance about us? It proceeds from countless blossoms that have just opened, and stand decked in exquisite colors. The dewdrops are flashing and glittering on the wet grass, and the sun's rays are lighting up the firmament and illuminating the ripples of the brook that flows at the foot of the trees. Do you not hear the lark, pouring forth his song as he rises higher and higher, until he is lost in the blue vault of heaven?" Perhaps the blind man will grieve at not being able to see all these beauties, but, nevertheless, his face lights up and he thanks me for describing them to him. How infinitely greater would be his delight if I could add: "Be patient a little longer; the veil will be withdrawn and with your own eyes you will see all these things." We are blind men, whom God leads by the hand, in His Fatherly goodness describing the beauties of the world to come, which is still hidden from us. He shows us, as far as we can understand, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; He explains how it is His wish to raise us too to His Divine Life, and to make us share the grace and glory of His nature; He tells us how, after we had marred His beautiful handywork, His own Son became Man in order to redeem us; He was a Child, even our Brother; He taught us and shed His Blood for us on the Cross; and this precious Blood still is outpoured in the Sacraments, and God the Son made Man still lives and works in His Holy Church. God shows us all this, but we are too blind to see it clearly; nevertheless we should rejoice, especially as our Divine Guide assures us that the veil will soon fall from our eyes, after which the light of Heaven will shine, and in this light we shall behold all the glories of God. What now we believe, will then be clear to our sight, and we may well be thankful it is so.

2. There is another class of truths, which our natural faculties

enable us to understand. Even the fall has not debarred man from perceiving clearly that there is but one God, the Creator of all things, and that the human soul is something spiritual that will outlive the body. Our unaided intelligence perceives these truths, which are stated explicitly in the Old and New Testaments. If we could ascertain them for ourselves, was it necessary for them to be thus stated? Yes and no—no, because we could have found them out for ourselves; yes, because, as a matter of fact, they were not fully recognized, and there is a wide difference between the ability to perceive anything and actual perception of it. These truths are not such as we can see with our eyes or hear with our ears, and it is not every man who is capable of desirous thought, or who has time for it, since many are occupied in earning their daily bread, and many others, as St. Thomas remarks, have neither any desire nor the necessary industry to investigate such matters. Yet because our salvation depends upon these truths, they ought to be known by all men, even by the poor and ignorant. It might take a long time to find them out independently, and our knowledge of them would be uncertain and probably not free from error, if they were not revealed in Holy Scripture. St. Paul tells us that “the invisible things of God are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made” (Rom., i, 20). This is undoubtedly true, but he adds: “Men became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened . . . and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of a man, and of birds and of four-footed beasts.” That is to say, the whole human race fell into idolatry, and only one nation clung to the belief in the true God, and yet He spared no pains with this nation. Among the pagans some few had a dim idea of these truths. The Roman philosopher Cicero was acquainted with the writings of those who had discussed

this subject, and gave it as his opinion that most of them believed in the gods, but that they contradicted one another so much that no one could enumerate all the theories regarding the nature of God. There is nothing, he adds, too foolish for some philosopher or other to have maintained it. What did they teach about the human soul? Some supposed it to be made of air, others of fire; some considered it immortal, others thought that it perished with the body, and only a god could decide who was in the right. Such was Cicero's view; and we see to what depths the intellect of man can sink. Even the best of these philosophers knew nothing about duties, and from whom could they learn them? From their gods, who amidst their feasts find no leisure to trouble about mankind, unless indeed they arbitrarily make sport of human destinies, playing with them as we do with a ball? No; from such gods every imaginable vice, but no virtue, could be learned. There was a god of wealth, but not poverty; a goddess of lust, but not of purity or self-discipline. We cannot therefore wonder at the corruption prevalent among the pagans, nor at the evils of slavery, the degradation of woman, and the existence of sins of which St. Paul says that they ought not to be named among Christians. Self-interest, greed and cruelty prevailed to such an extent that the Apostle does not hesitate to describe the world in his day as devoid of all natural affection and pity. Such was paganism, the state to which men had fallen when left to themselves, without any Divine Revelation. How astonished Plato, Aristotle, Cicero or any other of the ancient philosophers would be, were they now to revisit the world! What would be their surprise were they to hear the little children in our schools speak of God and the human soul, and were they to listen to an instruction on "Blessed are the merciful," which, after all, is only one point of Christian doctrine! With what veneration would

they regard the little book containing all this revelation! If they asked us whence we know all these truths at once so attractive and so exalted, we should surely be filled with holy joy and pride at being able to answer: "God Himself revealed them, and His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ taught them to us."

It seems almost incredible that "man, when he was in honor, did not understand" (Ps., *xlvi*, 13), and yet at the present day there are some who would fain be pagans, although they live in the midst of those who have received the Christian revelation. They admire Buddhism, and long for it as the religion of the future; they even wish to go as pilgrims to the Dalai-Lama. They may as well spare themselves the trouble; there may be some truths in Buddha's teaching on the subject of the unimportance of earthly things, and the conquest of pain; but Christianity teaches it far better. Let us turn a deaf ear to all the absurdities of pessimism and nihilism, and determine to remain Christians. Others attempt apparently to revive the religion of our forefathers, and the worship of Woden and Thor and other fabulous deities. Surely none but fools would throw away a splendid gift, and voluntarily return to the state of destitution from which a benefactor has sought to raise them; none but fools would deliberately try to relapse into an illness from which they have been cured. Are not Christians, who reject Christianity in order to fall back into the errors of their pagan ancestors, acting with incredible folly? Let us be proud to call ourselves Christians and be true to our faith until death!

After all, what has modern paganism to offer? What can the intelligence of man accomplish when deprived of the support of Divine Revelation? Who are the people who extol paganism and despise Christianity? Their works may display eloquent language and brilliant style, but they contain little truth, although they can-

not altogether rid themselves of all traces of the light in which they live. Still, they evince doubt and uncertainty on the subject of God, the origin of the world, the final aim of man and all the great questions about which we need certainty and clearness. Moreover, their moral code is defective; they call it independent morality, and extol its beauty and excellence, but these qualities are undoubtedly possessed by the Christian code, and are frequently only borrowed from it. Secular or independent morality contains much that is neither good nor beautiful, for instance its doctrines on free love, etc.; and it is utterly unfeeling and merciless. Nietzsche was the most logical of all the teachers of this school, and nothing could be more merciless than his theories. He denied Christ and Revelation, and resolutely closed his eyes to all that God has ever taught us; he was more ruthless than any of the old pagan philosophers,—he would abolish all pity, and sweep aside the weak and poor, leaving them to be trampled down by the “blond beast,” who alone was to rule and revel in every form of self-indulgence. But God, too, is logical, and He shrouded Nietzsche’s mind in darkness and madness, until the wretched man died in an asylum.

“We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is” (1 John, iii, 2). Now we walk in Faith; but do we rejoice in our Faith? Are we thankful that He has spoken, even though it may not have been in itself an indispensable revelation, but, then, was it absolutely necessary that our Saviour should have changed water into wine at the marriage feast? Let us not be ungrateful. God desires us, too, to share the feast; He bids us sit at His table and partake of the priceless wine of His glory, and be filled with unspeakable joy.

Let us thank Him for giving us a few drops of this Divine wine

even in this life—but we must not forget that Jesus and His Mother were invited to the feast at Cana; all depended upon their presence then, and we know that it is only where men cling in faith to Jesus, and love and honor His Mother—only, that is to say, in the Catholic Church, that God's Revelation is preserved true and inviolate,—only in that Church is it given to the faithful, as the wine of Divine grace and truth. Amen.

VI. THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES

God has spoken to and instructed us directly Himself, and not merely indirectly through His creatures. Of course He does not speak to every individual, but He revealed Himself through the prophets and afterwards through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. In order to save mankind from falling a prey to unbelief and despair God commissioned and inspired the prophets to reveal to the chosen people the divine law, and to announce the coming of a Redeemer. In the fulness of time Christ came and revealed more perfectly and completely the divine truth and the divine law. But, the unbeliever may ask, what proof is there that the prophets were really inspired and enabled to reveal the supernatural? What guarantee have we that our Lord and the prophets really made known the Word of God? We have, thank God, a guarantee that we cannot possibly question; we have only to read the doctrines taught by Christ and the Apostles, and we shall at once recognize their beauty, dignity and simplicity; we shall realize that they throw light upon all the intricate problems of life, and fill us with zeal and enthusiasm for all that is good and noble, and, lastly, we shall perceive the glorious fruits of this teaching, fruits borne by individuals and by the whole human race. Many people have already pointed out that these considerations are enough to prove that the revelation made by Christ and the prophets has a Divine and not a human origin. Others, however, would not be satisfied with this proof, and it is well that we have additional interior evidence of the truth of revelation. All men are bound

to believe God's Word, but they must be able to recognize it as such with ease and certainty. Are there any tokens by which it may be known? When an ambassador is sent from one king to another, he has to show his credentials, *viz.*, the seal and signature of the sovereign whose envoy he is. Now the prophets, and still more our Lord Jesus Christ, have credentials bearing God's seal and signature in writing so plain that its authenticity cannot be questioned. The chief of these credentials are miracles. What are miracles? Are miracles possible? How can they be recognized? What are they intended to prove? These are four most important questions, upon which all Christianity depends. They are essentially modern questions, for modern unbelief and modern science, as it is called, delight in answering them all negatively. We, however answer them most emphatically in the affirmative. Let us consider the first two questions to-day, *viz.*: What are miracles? and, Are miracles possible?

I. *What are miracles?* Not long ago we read the story of the marriage in Cana, at which our Lady said to her Divine Son: "They have no wine." Jesus, without rising from His seat, ordered the water-pots to be filled with water, and when this water was tasted, it proved to be wine. On another occasion a mighty storm arose, and the waves dashed over the ship, filling it with water and threatening to sink it. The disciples were experienced seamen, but they began to tremble and fear, until Christ arose and rebuked the wind and the waves, saying: "Peace, be still." Again, sick people, suffering from all kinds of diseases, were brought to Jesus, and He healed them. Doctors heal the sick at the present day, first diagnosing the disease and then prescribing a remedy; days, weeks or even months may pass before the patient is cured, and he may never be cured at all, but Jesus acted otherwise. He said to a leper: "Be thou

made clean," and he was cured at once. He said to a man who had been a cripple for 38 years: "Stand up," and he stood up immediately. He touched the eyes of the blind, and they regained their sight. A ruler came to Him saying: "Lord, come down before that my son die." Jesus did not accompany him, but said: "Go thy way, thy son liveth," and at that very moment the fever left him. The little daughter of Jairus lay dead, when Jesus took her by the hand saying: "Damsel, arise," and immediately she rose up and walked. A young man was being carried out to burial, but Jesus touched the bier and said: "Young man, I say to thee, arise," and he that was dead sat up and began to speak. Jesus stood before the grave where Lazarus lay buried, and many of the Jews were present. Martha, the dead man's sister, said: "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days," but Jesus only cried with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come forth," and he that had been dead came forth. You all know these stories, and many others like them, which we read in the Gospels. They are accounts of miracles, things that took place publicly, seen and heard by men, things affecting tangible objects, such as the limbs and bodies of human beings—in a word, things palpable to the senses, and yet beyond the powers of nature to effect,—such are miracles. I know that some people will say that everything is explicable either by suggestion or by hypnotism; miracles, they maintain, are assumed by believers to take place, and it is true that firm confidence and an uncritical attitude of submission to a superior force often effect cures; a sick man desires to recover his health, and is persuaded that some particular person or remedy can help him; as soon as that person approaches or that remedy is applied, fresh life is imparted to his body. This, we are told, is all extremely simple and natural, but it is not quite so simple and natural as it appears to

be. The force of suggestion may be great, especially in the case of nervous, hysterical and imaginary diseases, when it may literally impart fresh life to a sickly body. But how could suggestion cure the man who had been a cripple for 38 years, or the ruler's son, whom Christ declined to visit, or the deaf, the dumb and the blind? Nor can our Lord's miracles be explained as the result of hypnotism. You may hypnotize a blind man and tell him that he can see, and he may believe you, and think that his sight is restored, but when he comes out of his hypnotic trance, he is as blind as ever. Could either hypnotism or suggestion have raised to life the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus? No; it is admitted that suggestion can effect nothing in the case of real organic disturbances and physical defects. Miracles of healing do not, however, stand alone; it is impossible to ascribe the changing of water into wine to suggestion, nor the calming of the storm on the lake. We are told that a great king on one occasion ordered the sea to be scourged, to allay its fury. This might indeed be a sort of suggestion, but the scourging certainly did not diminish the tempest.

No, we cannot account for miracles by saying that they are due to suggestion or hypnotism, to any human skill or power, to the influence of any creature or to any natural force. God alone can work miracles, and He is present whenever a real miracle takes place. When Pharaoh's magicians witnessed all the wonders wrought by Moses, they said: "This is the finger of God." Nicodemus said to our Saviour: "No man can do these signs which thou dost, unless God be with him." The men who were in the ship with our Lord, when He calmed the storm, asked: "What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?" They were convinced that one who could perform such wonderful works was no mere man, but God. God only works miracles; He works them through

men, but He is the real Agent, just as in the ordinary course of affairs. He works by means of the laws and forces that He has given to His creatures. When a miracle takes place, God intervenes directly, and accomplishes Himself what the forces of nature are powerless to effect.

II. But are miracles *possible*? Strauss says that they are not, because they are contrary to the consciousness of the modern world. A strange and ridiculous reason! Rousseau, another infidel, spoke much more sensibly and honestly on this subject. In answer to the question: "Can God work miracles?" he said: "The mere question would be impious, if it were not so absurd. Whoever answers it in the negative does not deserve the honor of being punished; he ought to be shut up as demented."

Why should miracles be impossible? Why should God be unable to act directly, and independently of the laws and forces of nature? Some people tell us that this is quite impossible, and that the laws of nature never change. Björnson, the Norwegian poet, after making a statement to this effect, added: "Were it otherwise, life would be intolerable." Life would indeed be intolerable were the natural laws to depend upon the arbitrary fancy of Björnson or any other human being, but, thank God! this is not the case. There can be nothing intolerable in the belief that they are dependent upon the almighty, all-wise and all-merciful God. A man who denies the existence of God, must of course reject the possibility of miracles, but, as the Psalmist declares, only the fool hath said in his heart: "There is no God." God is almighty, and everything that is was made by Him, and the laws of nature are no exception to this rule. As we read in the Book of Wisdom (xi, 21): "He has ordered all things in measure and number and weight." Not only did God lay down the laws of nature, but He continues to act in and through

the forces of nature. The farmer scatters seed in his field, but God giveth the increase. Without God no star would occupy its place in the firmament, and no living thing would draw breath. He alone is omnipotent, and He created everything of His own free will, for He was under no constraint; nothing obliged Him to create the universe, He created it as and because He pleased. Has He ceased to be a free agent? Is He subject to the laws of nature? Surely not, since they are wholly dependent upon Him and were made by Him. Man, weak as he is, and subject as he is to these laws, has nevertheless some control over them, and can employ electricity, fire and water as he wishes; why then should God have no power over the natural laws? The sun and moon attract the vast volume of water in the ocean and draw it upward, in defiance of the force of gravitation; why should not God influence His creatures and the forces governing them, and effect directly what, as a rule, He accomplishes by means of the natural laws? He created all things out of nothing, and they continue to exist as long as and because it is His will. Only a fool can deny that God possesses this power, the same sort of fool as says: "There is no God."

But, we are asked, is it seemly for God thus to interfere in the course of nature? We must not imagine that He changes His purpose—no, He is unchangeable, and from all eternity He has decreed what takes place in time. Nor must we think of God as working miracles arbitrarily, just to remind us of His presence or to show us what He can do. We know that He is infinitely wise, as well as infinitely powerful—all that He does, is wise, and when He does anything extraordinary, like a miracle, He must have most wise reasons for His actions. What are these reasons? Suppose a mother is sitting beside her child's sickbed; the doctor says

that he must die, and in her sorrow she remembers that there is One above who loves her and the boy; she throws herself upon her knees and implores God to restore him to health, for she knows well that He can do it, and will grant her prayer, if it is for her good and that of her child. If it were in your power, my brethren, to cure him, would you not grant her request? Assuredly; but it is not in your power; God alone can give the boy back to his mother, and who can forbid Him to do so? He is good. He supplied wine to the poor people of Cana; He restored her son to the widow at Naim, and their brother to Mary and Martha. His miracles declare His goodness, but they do more. It is His will to speak to us in revelation, but how should He prove that He was the speaker? Miracles were necessary to attest His Word, to guarantee its truth—they are not only possible, they are an absolute necessity.

Now, my brethren, you are in a position to understand who deny the possibility of miracles. They are the enemies of revealed truth, men who refuse to believe what God has said, and to do what He has commanded. Otherwise they would not object to miracles. No one quarrels with the statement that two and two make four, because it pledges us to nothing—but supposing it had some bearing upon our moral life, and that those who accepted it were bound to be humble, obedient and self-restrained, I am certain that in the course of a few months books and pamphlets would be written to prove that it was by no means certain that two and two made four. Eventually some one would go so far as to deny the possibility of two and two making four. It is human nature; men gladly accept what appeals to them, even if it is false, and reject what they dislike, however certain it may be. It is the case with religion, more than with anything else. My brethren, let us be

honest to ourselves and to God. We cannot possibly doubt that it is in His power to work miracles; common sense tells us that it must be so, and history records innumerable miracles that have actually taken place. They prove that what His messengers have taught, is the Word of God, and when we realize this fact, we shall behave like those who witnessed our Saviour's miracles, and exclaim with humble adoration: "Lord, we believe." We believe the fundamental truth of Christianity, that our God is infinitely free and infinitely powerful, and therefore can work miracles, which none of His creatures can do. We believe this firmly, and we refuse to be led astray by any specious arguments. We are indeed liable to doubts concerning our faith, for we live in an atmosphere of doubt, and inhale it with the air that we breathe. Such doubts may be as the wind preceding a tempest, and they may threaten to destroy all our peace of mind; if so, we know what we have to do. When the waves dashed over the ship, the disciples cried: "Lord, help us, we perish"; let us, too, appeal to Christ, and though He may seem to slumber, He is awake and, as the psalmist says: "He ruleth the power of the sea, and appeaseth the motion of the waves thereof." He will arise and rebuke the storm, and there shall be a great calm. Amen.

VII. DEMONSTRABILITY OF MIRACLES, AND THE FORCE OF THEIR EVIDENCE

God created the forces of nature and imposed certain laws upon them, and He continues to act through His creatures, and does not, having once created them, leave them to go their own way. He is a free agent, and as He creates everything of His own free will, when and as He pleases, He reserves to Himself the right of acting from time to time independently of the laws that He has made, and of accomplishing things that the forces of nature are powerless to effect; in other words, He can work miracles. Miracles, therefore, are possible, and are not contrary to the nature of creatures but superior to it. Nor are they opposed to that of God, who works them without Himself undergoing any change, because from all eternity they formed part of His design, and He, the all-wise, perceives adequate reasons for them. Sometimes they are intended to give us a special proof of His love, as when the widow's son was raised to life at Naim, but more frequently they are wrought when He wishes to confirm His Divine Word, that He has made known to us, by deeds no less Divine. We discussed this subject last time, and the facts are too obviously true for any doubt to be possible.

We are asked occasionally how miracles may be recognized, and how we are to know what they are intended to reveal. Let us take these two points as our subject for to-day.

1. How are we to recognize a miracle when it occurs? I referred recently to certain acts performed by our Saviour, which Christians generally regard as miraculous. Let us consider one or two of them. First, let us picture our Lord standing with His Disciples and a number of Jews near the tomb of Lazarus, which

was closed with a block of stone. When this was about to be removed, Martha remonstrated, saying: "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days." Nevertheless Jesus cried: "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead man arose. Now there is here no room at all for doubt; Lazarus was dead, and decomposition had set in, and yet he came forth alive out of the tomb. We may not know all the forces of nature, but it is certain that they could not effect this, and whatever wonderful discoveries are made in the future, no one imagines that it will ever be possible to discover a method of raising the dead. Death separates soul and body, and only He, who in the first instance united them to form a living man, can reunite them and restore a dead man to life. That is to say, God alone can raise the dead—and here we have a real test of a miracle, which is something so far beyond the forces of nature that God alone can accomplish it. Again, on another occasion Jesus saw a man who had been blind from his birth. Our Lord spat on the earth, mixed moisture and clay and smeared it on the blind man's eyes, and after he had washed them he could see. Everyone was astonished; some supposed that he was not the same man, but he asserted his identity. Then they took him to the Pharisees, who asked how he had recovered his sight, and he replied: "That man that is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes, and said to me: 'Go to the pool of Siloe and wash.' And I went and washed, and I see." It was an undeniable fact that he could see, but those about him were not convinced that he was the man who had been blind, so they summoned his parents, and asked them, saying: "Is this your son, who you say was born blind?" The parents answered: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind, but how he now seeth we know not . . . ask himself." They called the man again and solemnly

conjured him to speak the truth; but he repeated his assertion, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." I think that if ever a fact was proved beyond all shadow of doubt, it is the restoration of this man's sight, but how was it effected? Did earth and spittle ever give back sight? No, they would be more likely to destroy it. Was the recovery of his sight due to any natural means? No, the Jews perceived that well enough; they could not deny it, and so they cursed the man. His cure was undeniably miraculous.

Renan, the infamous French infidel, thought that in order to prove the occurrence of a miracle it was necessary to appoint a commission consisting of philosophers, men of science and historians. He proposed to have a corpse brought in so that every member of the commission could convince himself that life was extinct—then, if anyone came in and restored the dead to life, Renan professed himself willing to believe in miracles, always provided that the experiment could be repeated as often as anyone desired; but, he added, the experiment will never succeed, therefore miracles are impossible. It seems as if Renan were presuming to dictate to God, for in the Gospels we read how a dead man was raised to life. Those who witnessed the raising of Lazarus were not, it is true, a committee of philosophers and scientists, but they were intelligent people, possessing the senses of sight, hearing and smell. Renan maintains that Christ enjoined silence upon those whom He cured, thus showing that He wished His miracles to remain secret, but the French writer overlooks the fact that people who do good, do not as a rule seek publicity, moreover our Lord's miracles were not always hidden. Crowds in Jerusalem were present when the man born blind received his sight; all the inhabitants of Bethany gathered round the tomb of Lazarus, and on one occasion 4,000, on another 5,000 people were miraculously fed. Miracles were wrought

in the sight of Scribes and Pharisees, as well as before the Disciples, and even our Lord's enemies had to acknowledge that "this man doth many miracles" (John, xi, 47). These facts have never been denied, even by pagans like Celsus and Julian, although many have attempted to refer them to natural causes. It was impossible to deny the occurrence of our Lord's miracles, because so many people witnessed them. Quadratus, a disciple of the Apostles, said to the Emperor Hadrian: "Our Saviour's miracles stand any test, because they are genuine; I call to witness the persons whom He healed and raised from the dead, who outlived Him, and some of whom were still alive in our lifetime" (Euseb. Hist. eccl. 6, 3). Even those most ready to doubt could require no better evidence. It is therefore possible to prove the occurrence of miracles, and it has been done again and again. It may be difficult in the case of some events recorded in the history of the Church, as well as in that of some reputed miracles in our own day; the evidence in support of them may be inadequate, or they may be due to natural causes, or there is some mistake or delusion about them. This is, however, not the point under discussion; we are considering miracles recorded in Holy Scripture, and their genuineness is undeniable.

2. What is the good of miracles? What do they prove? We may be sure that, when God works a miracle, it is not simply for the sake of display. He intends to speak to us through the miracle. Of course He speaks to us through His creatures and through every event that takes place. He makes the sun rise and set; He causes seeds to grow, and gives us remedies to cure our diseases. All these things proclaim His power, wisdom and goodness, and, as St. Augustine says, they are all, in a sense, miracles, but they are of everyday occurrence, effected by the forces of nature, and we are

apt to take such things as a matter of course and to pay no attention to them, and therefore now and then God speaks in another way. He darkens the sun, when there is no natural reason for its eclipse, He multiplies bread instantaneously so as to feed multitudes, and by His Word He heals the sick and raises the dead. These are His own peculiar miracles, and through them He cries to us: "I am the Lord, thy God." Man hears this voice and in amazement responds: "My Lord and my God." We are told further that the man born blind, after receiving his sight, fell down and adored our Saviour.

God loves us in a very special manner, as a father loves his children, and therefore He wishes to teach us what we ought to believe and do. He teaches us in ways adapted to our nature, through other men, through His envoys, the prophets, and chiefly through His Son, who became Man for this purpose. But what guarantee have we that they are sent by God? Here we see God's goodness. He gives us reason and does not require of us, as men are apt to do, blind belief, unsupported by any evidence, in the Divine mission of His ambassadors; no, He sends them to us provided with credentials, signed and sealed by Himself. Whilst they speak, He acts, bringing forward proofs, such as He alone can furnish, and working miracles in support of their teaching. This is the principal reason for God's miracles; they prove that the doctrines taught by Christ and the prophets are Divine, and that the commandments laid down by them are the expression of God's will. Unless in our insolent blindness and obstinacy we deliberately defy God, these miracles constrain us to believe and obey Him.

This is the view taken by God's messengers of the miracles that He works by their means. "Though you will not believe me," says our Lord, "believe the works, that you may know and believe that

the Father is in me, and I in the Father." "The works themselves, which the Father hath given me to perfect, they give testimony of me that the Father hath sent me" (John, x, 38; v, 36). When St. John's disciples came to Christ asking whether He were the Messiah, who was to come, He replied: "Go and relate to John what you have seen and heard; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again" (Matt., xi, 3, 4). He changed the water into wine to manifest His glory; He raised Lazarus to make the people believe in Him; and His own wonderful Resurrection ought to convince even the most obstinate of His Divine mission. Even the Pharisees regarded it in this light. When Christ raised the widow's son at Naim, the evangelist tells us that the people all "glorified God, saying: 'A great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited His people'" (Luke, vii, 16). When He healed the sick, "many believed in His Name, seeing His signs which He did" (John, ii, 23); and after the raising of Lazarus "many of the Jews who . . . had seen the things that Jesus did, believed in Him (John, xi, 45). Even the Pharisees and chief priests, after hearing the story, recognized its significance and in their impotent fury exclaimed: "What do we, for this man doth many miracles? if we let him alone, all will believe in him" (ibid. xi, 47, 48).

Miracles are worked by God in corroboration of His prophets' utterances, proving beyond all possibility of doubt that these utterances are God's words; otherwise He would be deceiving us, and how can He, who is infinitely true and holy, deceive His people? The proofs that He gives are intelligible and effectual—even the ignorant must understand them, and the learned must acknowledge their force. Moreover, they retain their validity forever. Although God still works miracles, yet He does so more seldom than of yore.

St. Gregory tells us very beautifully that the infant Church required them, just as a newly planted tree requires to be watered. But the Gospel miracles still hold good, and will do so forever, for they are Divine evidence in support of God's truth. We possess indeed an abundance of proofs, one alone would have sufficed to assure us of the Divine character of the doctrine preached by our Lord and the prophets. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. In the Old Testament we read how God opened the flood-gates of heaven, covering the dry land with water, how He caused torrents of fire and brimstone to fall, how He overwhelmed the enemies of His people, how He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, how He led the Israelites across the Red Sea and gave them a pillar of cloud and fire to guide them, and how He fed them with manna and brought them to the Promised Land. I cannot attempt to enumerate all the miracles in the New Testament—the angel's song at Bethlehem, the star that guided the wise men, the changing of the water into wine, the feeding of multitudes with a few loaves, the wonderful cures, the casting out of devils, the raising of the dead. Our Saviour seems to have worked 'miracles lavishly during His life, and after His death the Resurrection was the greatest and most glorious of all His miracles. We must acknowledge that God's envoys possess credentials such as no other ambassadors can show, and that His doctrine is supported by incontestable evidence. Surely He has left nothing undone in order to convince us, and we, who believe in Him, cannot possibly waver in our faith. A mediaeval theologian made a remark that is quite true, though it sounds blasphemous, he said: "If we are mistaken in relying upon God's Word, we shall be able to appear before Him and accuse Him of having led us into error." But, thank God, we are not mistaken; God cannot deceive us, and therefore we cannot go astray, and we

may proudly and confidently exclaim with St. Paul: "I know whom I have believed."

God is certainly not to blame for the unbelief prevalent among men; He has spoken plainly enough, and has proved most convincingly the truth of His Words, but men refuse to believe Him. If a man wilfully shuts his eyes, and declares that the sun does not exist, he refuses to see it, though it is shining brightly in the sky. Even among us faith is often very weak, so that it bears no fruit, but God is not to blame. Think of the sower in the Gospel; he sowed good seed abundantly, but some fell among thorns, some on rock soil, and some was eaten by the birds. So is it in our case; God's Word is taught us, but our hearts are hard as a rock; we have time for pleasures and follies, but we do not care to listen to instruction, and our passions, especially our pride, tend to choke the good seed. Help us, O Lord, to amend our ways; grant that henceforth Thy seed may fall on good ground and grow and bring forth fruit! Amen.

VIII. PROPHECIES AS TOKENS OF THE REVELATION

The Prophets, among whom we number Christ, the greatest of them all, are God's ambassadors, whom it is our duty to hear, since from their lips we learn God's Word and law. God has endowed us with intelligence that demands reasons and proofs, and as He desires our religion and faith to be reasonable, He does not require us blindly to accept the message conveyed by His ambassadors, but allows us to examine their credentials. We have already begun to do this, for we have looked critically at the seal which these credentials bear. It consists of the wonderful works which He alone can accomplish, such as calming storms, expelling evil spirits, healing those apparently incurable and raising the dead. The seal consists therefore of the miracles recorded in Holy Scripture, and we can question neither its authenticity nor its Divinity, and consequently the revelation on which this seal is set is also Divine. But this is not all. In the miracles God displayed His power as a guarantee of the truth of His Words. But He wished to give us a pledge of His Divine Wisdom also, and He did this by means of the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, which He promulgated for and through His messengers. Miracles therefore are the seal attached to their credentials, and prophecies are, as it were, their Divine signature. If you will listen attentively, you will understand my meaning, and perceive that this signature is plain and legible, and that no one can forge it; hence it proves with certainty the truth and Divine character of the doctrine that bears it.

1. Prophecies are statements regarding the future, which no one could foresee by natural means. Suppose a man has a good income,

but lives beyond it, and does not work. I foretell that sooner or later he will be bankrupt, but this is not a prophecy on my part, for it is quite obvious and natural that, when his income is less than his expenditure, in course of time he will have nothing left. An astronomer watches the stars and a meteorologist makes observations. The one calculates the rising and setting of the planets according to certain definite rules, whilst the other notices fluctuations in temperature and barometric pressure, atmospheric disturbances and air-currents. The astronomer can predict eclipses, the meteorologist issues warnings of approaching storms, but neither is a prophet, since their knowledge of the future is obtained by purely natural means. They know the causes producing the eclipse and the storm. Pyrrhus once made war upon Rome and sent to consult the oracle at Delphi regarding his prospects of success. The reply that he received was: "You are making war, victory is certain." Was this a prophecy? When two armies are fairly equal, it is not easy to foretell which will gain the day, for much depends upon the skill of the generals and the personal courage of the men—things which cannot naturally be ascertained. Does this fact make the oracle's answer prophetic? Let us see what happened: on hearing that victory was certain, Pyrrhus advanced against Beneventum, and sustained a crushing defeat. Victory was indeed certain, but it was on the Roman side. The Pythia had not deceived Pyrrhus, but she spoke in general terms and ambiguously, and really foretold nothing but what was self-evident. Any one can do this, without being a prophet. In places where people are very superstitious, we often hear of fortune-telling, and old women who profess to read men's destiny from packs of cards. I need hardly point out to you how foolish it is to believe predictions explicable on purely natural lines; they are certainly not prophetic.

But now let us look at the Old Testament. We read of a man named Nahum who, about 660 B.C., proclaimed that Ninive should be laid waste; some thirty years later Nabopolassar attacked and destroyed the city. A century earlier, Isaias stood before King Achaz and foretold a great wonder: "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and his Name shall be called Emmanuel" (Is., vii, 14). This was to take place when the Sceptre had departed from Juda (cf. Gen., xlix, 10), but before the destruction of the second Temple, and this Emmanuel was to die in the seventieth week of years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Dan., ix, 24, etc.). Micheas foretold His birthplace, saying: "Thou, Bethlehem, art a little one . . . out of thee shall He come forth that is to be the Ruler in Israel" (Mich., v, 2). A star was to herald His coming, kings would bow down before Him, and the voice of one crying in the desert would proclaim Him. He was to work miracles, to be sold and betrayed, to appear as a worm and no man, and to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. Gall and vinegar would be offered Him to drink, His hands and feet would be pierced and lots cast for His garments; yet not one of His bones should be broken, nor should He see corruption; His sepulchre should be glorious.

All this was foretold, and it all took place, yet no human being could of himself have foreseen it, nor were there any natural means of ascertaining it. Whence then did the prophets derive their information? They tell us themselves, for over and over again recur such phrases as: "The Word of God came upon me," "The Spirit of the Lord was on me," "Lo, thus saith the Lord." God Himself told them what they were to say; sometimes revealing it in a vision, sometimes by a mysterious voice or wonderful token, sometimes inspiring them as they spoke. No matter how the information was conveyed, it came from God, and that is the essence of prophecy.

God speaks, God who knows the future, however distant and obscure, or rather, God to whom nothing is future, and from whose eyes nothing is hidden, for there is no sequence of events; to Him all is present. From time to time it has pleased Him to raise a man up to His own height, to open his eyes, removing all his natural weakness of vision, so that he beholds, what otherwise no creature can see, and is bidden by the Spirit to reveal the same to his fellow-men. A prophet is one with whom God deals in this fashion.

But there are two arguments raised against prophecies, and we must briefly consider them. The first is that the fulfilment of a prophecy may be due to chance. Let me quote Cicero to you on the subject of chance. He says that an animal may by chance trace the letter A with its snout on the sand, but it does not therefore follow that the same animal could write a drama like the *Andromache* of Ennises. The same thing may be said of prophecies; one or two might be fulfilled accidentally, but it is impossible that they should all be fulfilled in every detail. The other objection is that there may be some natural explanation of the whole matter, and reference is made to the phenomena of magnetism, spiritism, somnambulism and clairvoyance, as if these were of the same character. These phenomena are very strange, and are occasionally accompanied by remarkable powers of memory and increase of knowledge, but they do not in the least resemble the gift of prophecy. Those who have investigated these phenomena tell us that, where no deception is present, much can be explained by stimulus supplied to the nerves and the imagination, but it is quite certain that no one who dabbles in the so-called black arts could foretell events so minutely as did the prophets of the Old Testament, and no medium could know with certainty what resolutions a person endowed with free will would form one day in advance, far less after a lapse of centuries. No

one can know this but God Himself, and the prophet to whom He chooses to reveal it.

2. What kind of evidence do prophecies afford? They prove three things: firstly, that God is interested in us, and stands in a close and almost personal connection with us. Prophecies, regarded from this point of view, are seen to form part of His Divine providence and of revelation. Secondly, they are sources of consolation and encouragement to those who hear them, especially in times of affliction. When the Israelites were surrounded by enemies, and were languishing as homeless exiles in captivity, God sent prophets to console them. In these sad gloomy times, may not we too, my Brethren, find comfort in our Lord's assurance that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church?

Prophecies are uttered for a third reason, far higher than the preceding. All collectively, both those already fulfilled and those still awaiting fulfilment, prove the truth and Divinity of revelation and of Christianity. They are, as we have seen, God's signature, guaranteeing the authenticity of His doctrine and Commandments. The prophets themselves looked upon them in this light: Isaias said to King Achaz: "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God," a token, that is to say, of the truth of my words. Achaz refused, and the prophet continued: "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son" (Is. vii, 11, 14). Our Divine Saviour, the chief of all the prophets, in foretelling His betrayal by Judas, said: "I tell you before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass, you may believe that I am He" (John, xiii, 19). It is indeed a satisfactory proof. The prophets and Christ appeared preaching new doctrines, and as a guarantee of their Divine mission and the truth of their teaching, they revealed the innermost thoughts of men, thoughts of which these men were still unaware, and resolu-

tions which they were liable to change at any moment. Who could enable the prophets to do this save God Himself, who thus satisfied their statements? No one could forge this signature: "Thus saith the Lord: 'Who is like to Me? let him call and declare . . . and the things to come and that shall be hereafter let him shew'" (Is., xlv, 7). Since therefore God has signed and sealed the faith that we profess, it must be true and Divine. There is another point to consider: One single prophecy uttered by God would be enough to vouch for the truth of all revelation, but we possess hundreds of prophecies, many of which have been fulfilled under the new dispensation. We have overwhelming evidence that none can gainsay. If in some vast cathedral one taper were lighted, it would be visible, but it would not enable us to see much else. But when hundreds of lights blaze in every part of the building, the whole is plain to view, and we can see the arches, pillars and architectural details. The cathedral flooded with glorious light is a type of our Catholic Faith, illumined by prophecies. If any one studies them without prejudice, he will soon perceive how much light they cast even on the apparently obscure doctrines of our Holy Faith. We cannot look for more than partial enlightenment in this life, for St. Peter tells us that prophecies are now "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter, i, 19), but nevertheless they are a real, radiant light. In writing to the Thessalonians St. Paul describes his preaching as a manifestation of power and of the Holy Spirit. The same may be said of all revelation and of Christianity as a whole, it is a manifestation of power and the Holy Spirit. Miracles show forth God's power, and prophecies reveal His Spirit; the former are the seal, the latter the signature confirming His doctrine. Let us then accept God's revelation with reverence, as being truly Divine. We must accept the

whole, not merely those points in it that appeal to us ; God, who is infinitely wise and true, cannot teach us what is false. We should rejoice in His revealed truth, for it sheds light on the dark paths of this life ; there is still need of Faith, but when the day star arises in our hearts, Faith will give place to sight, and to the fullness of joy forever and ever. Amen.

IX. PROPHECIES RELATING TO OUR LORD'S PASSION

God is eternal, and His eye discerns all that is still hidden from us in the future, whilst it also searches the hearts of all His creatures. No man can know what God discovers there, unless by special revelation, such as is vouchsafed to His ambassadors, whose prophetic utterances convey the knowledge to others. God does not speak in words only, but also in deeds, deeds which He alone performs and of which He determines the significance. These deeds we call types; they are, as it were, pictures of what will eventually take place; and prophecies and types go together, because both come from God, and together form the signature that He sets upon the credentials of His ambassadors. Both refer in an especial manner to the one great Ambassador, whose path was prepared by all the other prophets, namely, the Only-Begotten Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, whose lifework was our redemption. The Gospel tells us that towards the close of His life, our Lord hid Himself, and that is why the Church covers up His figure on the Crucifix for the last fortnight of Lent, although He ought to be continually in our thoughts at this time. In a somewhat similar fashion our Saviour's figure is concealed in the prophecies and types of the Old Testament; let us consider it to-day as God revealed it to His people ages before our Lord's coming. St. Bernard tells us that there are three points of which we ought not to lose sight in meditating upon the Passion; viz.: What did Christ suffer? How did He suffer? Why did He suffer? The prophets will answer these questions.

1. They tell us in great detail precisely *what* Christ was to suffer. All men were to conspire against Him. "Why have the Gen-

tiles raged, and the people devised vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ" (Ps., ii, 1, 2). But how could they hope to seize one who, whenever He chose, cast blindness upon them and vanished? They had recourse to treachery: "The man of my peace, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, hath greatly supplanted me" (Ps., xl, 10). "If he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him; but thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me, in the house of God we walked with consent" (Ps., liii, 13-15). Thirty pieces of silver were weighed out to the traitor (Zach., xi, 12), and false witnesses came forward so that sentence was given against Him, and He was condemned to a most shameful death. They pierced His Hands and Feet and numbered all His bones; they parted His garments among them, and for His vesture they cast lots; they gave Him vinegar to drink, and at last He resembled a worm, and no man; He was the reproach of men and the outcast of the people; all they that saw Him laughed Him to scorn, saying: "He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver him" (Ps. xxi and lxviii). At last He opens His mouth and cries: "O God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me?" "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that the sun shall go down at midday, and I will make the earth dark in the day of light" (Amos, viii, 9). You all know this story, but every detail was foretold by David and Isaias, the one over 1,000, and the other six or seven hundred years before our Lord's birth. The Evangelists have recorded how their prophecies were fulfilled, and it is impossible to suppose that He, of whom such wonderful things were predicted, was merely an ordinary human being; God Himself could hardly prove more clearly that

the one who suffered such indignities was He of whom Isaias said that God Himself would come and save us (Is., xxxv, 4).

2. God told us *how* our Redeemer would suffer, as well as the kind of His sufferings. Let us call to mind how Abraham and Isaac, the son of the promise, went to Mount Moria. God had called Abraham and said: "Take thy only-begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will shew thee." They set out without delay, Isaac carrying the wood for the holocaust, and Abraham bearing fire and a sword. Isaac asked where the victim was, and Abraham replied that God would provide Himself a victim for a holocaust. Having reached the place which God had shewn him, he built an altar and laid the wood in order upon it; and when he had bound Isaac, he laid him on the wood; then, putting forth his hand, he took the sword to sacrifice his son. But God did not desire the boy's death and was satisfied with this proof of Abraham's obedience. Isaac was, however, a type of another sacrifice, another son of the promise, and Moria was a type of Golgotha, as Isaac was of Christ. Our Lord bore His Cross just as Isaac had carried the wood, but there was no need for Him to ask where the victim was. He had already said: "A body Thou hast fitted to me, . . . behold, I come" (Hebr., x, 5, 7), and He clasped in His arms the Cross on which He was about to die. He went like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening His mouth, and when He came to the place, He allowed Himself to be nailed to the Cross without uttering a word of protest. This time the blow was really struck, and Christ, the second Isaac, was slain; He did not resist, but gave His Body to the strikers; He turned not away His face from them that rebuked Him and spat upon Him. He was offered because it was His own will (Is., i and liii).

We cannot without emotion think of Isaac lying bound upon the altar of sacrifice, but surely our hearts should be touched still more when we think of Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, hanging on the Cross, willing and eager to be a sacrifice for our sins.

3. Lastly, the prophets tell us *why* Christ was to suffer. In speaking of the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with infirmity, Isaiah says: "Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is., liii, 4-6). Anyone reading these words must be reminded of the sin-offerings in the Levitical law, the victims on whom the priests laid the sins of the people. He will be reminded, too, of the Paschal lamb, whose blood was sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites, and of the brazen serpent in the wilderness. The people had murmured against God, and to punish them He sent serpents among them, which bit them and killed many. The Israelites in dismay came to Moses, saying: "We have sinned . . . pray that the Lord may take away these serpents from us." And Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said: "Make a brazen serpent and set it up for a sign; whosoever being struck, shall look on it, shall live." Moses therefore made a brazen serpent, . . . which when they that were bitten looked upon, they were healed (Numbers xxi). The Israelites represent the human race; the desert is the world; ever since our first parents listened to the serpent in Paradise, the brood of noxious reptiles has been multiplying, and now they are all around us, watching for an opportunity to assail us and to set their poisonous fangs into our souls. There are serpents of pride, envy, hatred, intemperance,

impurity, doubt and despair. Who can heal a soul once wounded by any of these? "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John, iii, 14). He hung on the Cross, sinless though He was, and desired that the blood flowing from His wounds should heal us, but, just as the Israelites had to look at the brazen serpent, so must we look up at Christ with faith and love. The Jews watched Him hanging on the Cross, but it did them no good, for they did not believe in Him. The penitent thief received forgiveness, for he had unbounded confidence in our Lord's goodness and mercy. Our Saviour Himself promised, if He were lifted up from the earth, to draw all men to Him; may He draw us and give us pardon and the kiss of peace! This, my Brethren, is the meaning of the brazen serpent—it is a type of the mystery of the Cross, a type devised by God, long before the crucifixion. *O Crux, ave!* Christ Himself foretold the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. For instance, before His last journey to Jerusalem He said to His Disciples: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man. For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again" (Luke, xviii, 31-33). Yes, our Lord foretold His Resurrection as well as His death, but even the darkest depths of His shame are lighted up by the Divine power and wisdom—the wisdom that so wonderfully foresaw all that would come to pass, and the power that fulfilled all predictions. Thus in Passiontide we see the Man of Sorrows with the glory of Heaven shining on Him. Let us think how much He suffered, and with what inexhaustible patience, remembering that it was all for us, for everyone of us, to make atonement for our sins and to

obtain for us strength to avoid sin in future. Listen to the voice of Holy Church, who reminds us how the prophecies and types of the Old Testament were fulfilled most perfectly during our Saviour's passion. But the Church shows us another picture and a still sadder one, for it represents ourselves. The sinful, ungrateful city of Jerusalem is a type of us, and it is to us that the words are addressed: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, O turn thee to the Lord thy God"—let us obey the call. Amen.

X. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION THE PROOF OF HIS DIVINE MISSION

We have seen how the credentials, given by God to His envoys, bear His divine seal and signature, consisting of miracles and prophecies. Let us return once more to the subject. Suppose that some one comes forward, professing to be divinely commissioned to teach. We ask for evidence in support of this statement, and in reply he says: "Thus saith the Lord," and proceeds to foretell things that no human being can possibly know, and what he foretells, actually occurs. We cannot doubt that he is really sent by God. Another, in proof of his divine commission, works miracles and does what God alone can do; again, we cannot refuse to recognize his credentials. God has sent many teachers and prophets into the world, but one ranks far above the rest, and the genuineness of his mission is attested by wonderful miracles and prophecies. This is Jesus Christ, through whom, as the apostle says, God spoke to us last, and whom His Heavenly Father presented to the world as His beloved Son. We have already discussed several of our Lord's marvellous works and the predictions that were fulfilled in Him, but one still remains for our consideration, and that one is the greatest of all miracles, the most glorious fulfillment of all prophecies, viz., the Resurrection. Strauss, an infidel, calls the Resurrection of Christ the heart of Christianity, and he is right. He is but reechoing St. Paul's words: "If Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor., xv, 14). Christ's resurrection is the central doctrine of the Christian faith, the most conclusive proof of His divine mission, of His divinity and of the divine origin of Christianity. Let us take the Resurrection as our subject for consideration to-day.

1. On more than one occasion our Lord foretold it. When He had driven the money changers and traders from the Temple, the Jews were indignant and asked: "What sign dost thou shew unto us, seeing thou dost these things?" Jesus answered: "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews misunderstood Him, but the evangelist adds: "He spoke of the temple of His body" (John ii, 19). Another time some of the scribes and Pharisees came to Him, saying: "Master, we would see a sign from Thee." Jesus replied: "No sign shall be given to this generation but the sign of Jonas the Prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" (Matt., xii, 38-40). Again when our Saviour and His Disciples were on the way to Jerusalem, He foretold in the greatest detail all the suffering that awaited Him, and said that on the third day He would rise again (Matt., xx, 19). Yes, He was to die and to be buried, but on the third day He was to rise again. Even the Jews were well aware of this prediction, for no sooner was He dead, that the chief priests and Pharisees went to ask Pilate to set a guard round the Sepulchre, giving as their reason the fact that Christ had said, whilst He was yet alive: "After three days I will rise again" (Matt., xxvii, 63).

Now let us consider what would be the case if Christ had not risen again. He would have deceived Himself, and have attempted to mislead both His friends and enemies. He would have been a seducer, as the Jews called Him, and St. Paul was perfectly right in saying that his own preaching and our faith would have been vain; in fact by this time Christianity would have disappeared. Christ's followers were far too timid to come forward and preach His doctrines, and no more would have been heard of His religion or of the Church that He promised to found. But now is Christ risen from

the dead, after suffering all that He had foretold, risen on the third day, as He predicted. Therefore what He said was true, since it actually took place. It is quite clear that God alone can foretell the resurrection of one who is dead, since God alone can effect such a resurrection, and consequently Christ was really sent by God, and the religion, that He taught, is divine. God Himself bore testimony to Him by means of the glorious fulfilment of the prophecies regarding the resurrection. "He is risen, as He said," were the words addressed by the angel to the women at the Sepulchre; yes, He rose precisely as and when He had foretold.

2. But did Christ *really* rise again? No reasonable person denies that He was really dead, when His body was laid in the sepulchre. Some foolish theory has indeed been put forward, according to which He was only unconscious, the lance thrust relieved the pressure on His heart, and in the coolness of the tomb He gradually recovered consciousness. We need not linger over such a supposition; the evangelists all agree in saying that life was extinct, and the flow of blood and water following the withdrawal of the lance confirms their statement. Moreover the Roman soldiers were satisfied that death had taken place, and their centurion reported accordingly to Pilate. Yes, Christ had really died, but did He really rise again? The evidence in support of the resurrection is too strong to be overthrown. First we have the testimony of God's angels, who had made known the mystery of our Saviour's incarnation and birth, and who now were to testify to His resurrection. When the women came to the sepulchre, they stood amazed at finding it empty, and the angel said: "He is not here, for He is risen, as He said." The women told the Disciples, and Mary Magdalene, who had seen her risen Lord, could tell more than the rest, but their report was not believed. On the way to Emmaus the two Disciples spoke almost contemptuously

of the woman's story, evidently thinking them victims of their own imagination. Yet not long after Christ revealed Himself to these two Disciples and supped with them. He had already shown Himself to Peter and John, then to the other Apostles, and lastly to Thomas, who was still unwilling to believe. To him He showed the marks of the wounds in His hands and side, and forced him to fall down and exclaim: "My Lord and my God." Afterwards He appeared to the Apostles at the Lake of Tiberias, and then to more than 500 Disciples at once. Our Saviour did not appear to one or two people, but to many; not only to women but to men, men, too, who doubted Him and were hard to convince. During forty days He appeared frequently, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another; in the open air and also when the doors were closed; in broad daylight He ate and talked with His Disciples. Who can doubt that He really rose again? Yet, that we may be more perfectly convinced, God has given us the testimony of His enemies as well as of His friends, and evidence supplied by enemies always carries weight. What do we learn from them? They were much annoyed at the fact that the soldiers appointed to guard the sepulchre had, in their alarm, rushed into the city, telling everyone what they had seen. If Christ were indeed risen again, the Pharisees' plan was completely frustrated, just at the moment when it seemed so successful. What were they to do? They would certainly have produced the dead body, had it been in their power to do so. At last the chief priests and ancients assembled to take counsel together, and decided to give a great sum of money to the soldiers, who were to say: "His Disciples came by night and stole Him away when we were asleep" (Matt., xxviii, 12, 13). St. Augustine remarks sarcastically: "What is the good of bringing forward witnesses who were asleep? You yourselves must have been asleep, when you devised such an

excuse." Such is the testimony furnished by our Lord's enemies and some still persist in denying that He rose again, suggesting all sorts of arguments, none of which is worth discussion. We should indeed refrain from arguing if a man were to come to us at noon, when the sun was high in the heavens, and were to tell us that it was not shining. We should shrug our shoulders and leave him alone, for it is quite useless to argue with such a person. I must, however, refer to one modern writer, who speaks of our Lord with affection and admiration, but is, nevertheless, His enemy, for he does not believe in His divinity. Harnack distinguishes between the message and the faith of Easter. By the former he means the report of the empty sepulchre and of our Lord's Resurrection and appearances to His Disciples. These Harnack would set aside as fictitious, but he wishes to retain the faith of Easter, i. e., our conviction of the spiritual victory won by Christ crucified. The German professor does not explain how we can keep one without the other, since there is abundant evidence in support of what he calls the Easter message, and it has always been believed by Christians, whose faith is based upon it. In the Apostles' Creed stand the words: "He rose again from the dead"; without this foundation all our faith falls to the ground, and Harnack's attempt to separate faith and facts is utterly futile. He may, like the chief priests of old, be accused of having put forward such a theory in his sleep. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Away with all half-hearted acceptance of the great fact of the Resurrection! Thank God, Christ is risen, and friends and foes alike bear witness to His Resurrection.

In his Faust, Goethe represents a man who has lost all faith and all hope of anything good and beautiful, and who, in his despair and weariness of life is on the point of putting an end to his existence.

He is just raising the cup of poison to his lips when he hears the bells and the music in a neighboring church, for it is Easter Sunday. Faust listens, shakes his head and says: "I hear the message, but I have no faith." Then he remembers the indescribable happiness that he used to feel at Easter when he was young, and he exclaims: "Resound, ye heavenly strains; my tears no longer refused to flow; I belong again to this world."

My Brethren, as Christians we accept with unswerving faith the doctrine of the Resurrection, which we were taught in our childhood. Every Easter when the bells ring out, the words, "Alleluia, Christ is risen," rise to our lips, and our hearts are filled with joy. Should not our faith inspire us with enthusiasm? Think how timid and cowardly the Apostles were before the Resurrection, but after Christ rose again they realized that He was indeed the Son of God, and that His teaching was divine. No longer did they hide behind closed doors, but went forth publicly, fearless of death and danger, preaching Christ crucified and, as they proudly added: "Christ risen again from the dead." We, too, believe in the same Christ, who said of Himself: "I am the Resurrection and the life." His Resurrection is to us a pledge that we shall rise again hereafter to life eternal; but it should also stimulate us to rise again now from our sins. We have the faith, my brethren, let us rejoice and glory in it, and may it quicken our hearts to fresh life, and develop in them an increase of hope and charity. Amen.

XI. MIRACULOUS GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

This teaching is re-echoed through the pages of the New Testament from God, who confirmed it, as we have seen, by prophecies and miracles. You may feel inclined to complain that it is so long since the prophecies were fulfilled and the miracles were wrought; you wish that you could have witnessed them yourselves. Yet, though we were not present, it is as certain as any historical fact can be, that Christ really gave sight to the blind, raised the dead to life, and Himself came forth in glory from the tomb. These facts are as certain now as when they took place, and therefore they ought to convince us just as much as they convinced the Disciples who actually witnessed them. Still you feel that you would like to behold a miracle. Very well, you can do so, and you need not envy our Lord's Disciples; a very great miracle, I may even say the greatest of all miracles, is plain to view, viz., the Church, which Christ founded in order to impart to us the doctrine and grace that He brought from Heaven. This Church is, as it were, our Lord Himself, living on from age to age and extending His sway over all the world. This is His greatest miracle, and we, who are so fortunate as to belong to the Church, can daily and hourly appreciate its magnitude. The mere growth of Christianity is a miracle, a greater miracle is the power of Christianity to transform the world, and the indestructibility of the Church is again miraculous. I propose to consider this series of miracles, and to take as my subject to-day the growth of Christianity; we shall see that it was so extraordinarily rapid as to deserve to be called miraculous.

1. Our Saviour Himself foretold this rapid growth when He said: "The kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed

. . . which is the least, indeed, of all seeds, but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof" (Matth., xiii, 31, 32). Yes, at the beginning the Church resembled a tiny seed, and the people belonging to her were a few fishermen and some women—persons of no wealth or education. Even after our Saviour's resurrection and ascension, His entire Church consisted of so few members that they could all assemble in one room, where they cowered in fear of the Jews, keeping the doors shut and hardly daring to speak above a whisper. The Church was indeed an insignificant grain of mustard-seed, until all at once there came a sound as of a mighty wind, and the tiny seed began to grow, being bedewed by Heaven, and its branches spread out so that the birds came to dwell there. They came from every part of the world, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians from the Far East, Phrygians and Cappadocians from Asia Minor, Egyptians, Arabs and Libyans from Africa, Jews and Romans—men of every known race and language. Before the Church was many hours old, they came to dwell on its branches, and whereas there had been only fifty or sixty members before, there were now over three thousand, and a few days later five thousand. Like a fierce bird of prey, Paul swooped down upon the birds on the branches, but soon joined them, meek and gentle as a dove. Jerusalem became too small to contain them all, and the Apostles went forth to preach. As St. John Chrysostom says, Peter took possession of Rome, the chief city of the world; Paul travelled to and fro, making known everywhere the doctrine of Christ; Andrew undertook to instruct the philosophers of Greece; Simon taught the barbarians; Thomas clothed the swarthy Ethiopians in the white robe of Baptism; James occupied the see of Jerusalem, and Mark that of Alexandria on the Nile; Luke and Matthew wrote

their gospels; John dealt with the most profound points of theology and exercised his ministry at Ephesus; Bartholomew taught the Lycaonians, and Philip converted the Phrygians by his miracles—further and further spread the branches of the Church, which now contained many besides poor and ignorant persons. We hear of the conversion of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, of an official at the Queen of Ethiopia's court, of Sergius Paulus, a Roman proconsul, and ere long the apostle of the Gentiles, who, in writing to the Philippians, sends them greetings from Christians at the imperial court. Scholars and philosophers were converted, men like Dionysius, Justin, Athenagoras, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Quadratus, and Aristides, who, not satisfied with belonging to the Church themselves, did their utmost to bring others within her fold. Before the year 200 A.D., Tertullian, writing from Africa to the proconsuls of the Roman empire, says: "We are but of yesterday, and yet our adherents are to be found in all your provinces, towns, islands, fortresses, councils, assemblies, camps, palaces, law courts and even in the Senate. We have left you only your temples. If we went away, how desolate would be the cities! If we migrated, what would become of commerce and civic life?" (Tertull. Apol., 37). This statement may be somewhat exaggerated, but still it shows that Christianity had spread all over the empire, and even unbelievers acknowledge this to be true. Harnack, who misses no opportunity of depreciating the importance of the Christian religion, cannot deny that its growth was surprisingly quick, and writes: "The fathers of the Church are justified in asserting that their faith spread with incomprehensible rapidity in each generation. Seventy years after the foundation of the first community of Gentile Christians in Antioch, Pliny used very emphatic language with regard to the growth of Christianity in far-distant Bithynia, and spoke of it as already threatening to

supersede the other religions in that province. Seventy years later the dispute about Easter shows us that a Christian organization existed, having its centre in Rome and extending from Lyons to Odessa. Again seventy years later the Emperor Decius declared that he would rather tolerate the presence in Rome of a rival emperor than of a Christian bishop; and barely seventy years more elapsed before the cross was attached to the Roman standards" (Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums*, p. 545). The tree of the Church, indeed, displayed vigorous growth, and, as Harnack points out, this growth was most astonishing and incomprehensible in its rapidity.

2. Some, however, may think that the rapid growth of Christianity, though astonishing, was not necessarily miraculous, in fact some of our opponents consider it quite natural, and draw attention to the fact that, as nearly the whole world was united under the Roman dominion, at the time when our Lord lived, it was almost inevitable that a world-wide empire should develop a world-wide religion. But is this really the case? Of course it was ordained by God's providence that the nations of the world should be politically united just at that period, and their union was an important factor, greatly facilitating the spread of Christianity; but those who think it possible to account for the origin and rapid development of a universal religion by pointing to political union, show their ignorance of history, and especially of religious history. The extension of their political power has in every age been an object of men's desires, as it was to Xerxes and Alexander before the time of the Romans; but in all the 4,000 years preceding the birth of Christ, we hear of no religion that aimed at embracing all nations. On the contrary each religion was national, and was well content to be so. The Hindoos, Persians, Greeks and Egyptians all had their national

religion, that never extended beyond the borders of the land in which they dwelt. Rome possessed its own state-religion, but tolerated within its walls the worship of all kinds of gods. No one conceived the idea of amalgamating all these forms of religion into one, that should be universal; even the Jewish faith, the only true pre-Christian religion, professed to be that of the Israelites alone. One solitary religion aimed at universality, since its Founder had ordered it to be preached to all nations, and had imparted to it, what He alone could bestow, the power to reach all men, and to be the grain of mustard-seed, destined to increase until it became a mighty tree, overshadowing the entire world.

But, it may be asked, did not Islam spread with an equally incomprehensible rapidity? It did indeed spread with fearful speed, but we cannot call it incomprehensible. Mohammed bade his followers use the sword, and promised them all that could gratify the passions of men, therefore it is not surprising that he found many adherents. Christ, however, taught a very different doctrine. He commanded St. Peter to sheathe his sword, and said that whosoever desired to be His Disciple must take up his cross and deny himself. No one can maintain that this teaching was likely to attract many converts, yet, nevertheless, Christianity spread at a marvellous rate. Some one may suggest that it was precisely the exalted character of Christian teaching that appealed to the minds and hearts of individuals and nations. Christianity, of course, possesses glorious doctrines, and men of most powerful intellect have delighted in them, but at the same time its mysteries humiliate the understanding and its commandments are hard to obey, especially those which require us to love our enemies and to mortify the flesh. Therefore one would hardly suppose that, in spite of its beauties, Christianity would have at once found many friends. Subsequently the Catholic Church

espoused the cause of science and art, and caused them to produce their finest masterpieces, but it was not so at first, for when St. Paul began to preach in Athens and St. Peter in Rome, they taught nothing but "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Gentiles foolishness" (1 Cor., i, 23). Theirs was the religion of the sick and poor; it inculcated charity such as the world abhors. Picture to yourselves St. Peter, at his first arrival in Rome. The city contained about two million inhabitants, all sunk in depths of ignorance and vice; every lie was readily believed; every crime was excused, if not actually applauded as a virtue. Picture St. Peter, still weary from his long journey, walking about the streets of Rome, and meeting one of those haughty philosophers, who had come to the centre of civilization in order to display their learning. Imagine him encountering Seneca, the most honest and straightforward of all the Romans, and suppose that this great man had condescended to engage in conversation with the stranger from Judaea, and to ask him why he had come to Rome. "I have come," St. Peter would reply, "to found a new religion." "Very well," Seneca might say, "one religion more or less will make no difference, among the innumerable deities worshipped in Rome, there will be room, no doubt, for your God." "My religion," says St. Peter, "is to drive out all your religions, my God will replace all your deities, and all Rome, from the emperor to the poorest beggar, and in fact all the world will serve Him." "Truly yours must be a mighty God! What is His name?" "Jesus, the crucified." "What! a crucified God? Does He offer great attractions to His followers?" "He bids them be chaste, patient and humble, and holds out to them the prospect of persecutions." "What means do you intend to employ in spreading your new religion?" "I possess nothing but my staff." "What are your intellectual attainments?" "I have none; I am a fisherman,

and know only how to cast my nets." The pagan philosopher would certainly not have wasted more time in conversation with such a man; he would have smiled contemptuously and dismissed him from his thoughts. Yet, my brethren, we are not inclined to smile, for we know that St. Peter was right, and succeeded in his undertaking. He overthrew the pagan gods, and set up the cross on the Capitol; his disciples traversed the length and breadth of the Roman empire, and converted it to Christianity.

My brethren, who really accomplished the conversion of the world? Was it St. Peter, or St. Paul, or the other Apostles? Was the conversion effected by earthly power and human wisdom? No, it is foolish even to suggest such a thing. The aim and the means of attaining it are absolutely disproportionate, the means are quite inadequate. Who then converted the world and caused Christianity to spread with such incomprehensible rapidity? St. Peter will supply the answer. After the miraculous cure of the lame man at the Temple gate, the Apostle, addressing the multitude, said that God had effected the restoration of the cripple to health. In the same way God alone cured mankind suddenly and made them Christians. Christianity is His work, His greatest miracle; and St. Augustine was right when he said that the Christian religion was undoubtedly propagated by means of miracles, but its extraordinary extension was itself the greatest and most incomprehensible of them all.

We have heard of the grain of mustard-seed, that represented the infant Church, so small and insignificant at first. But at Pentecost there was the sound of a mighty wind, and the Holy Ghost under the form of parted tongues of fire, came down and imparted to the tiny seed His own infinite energy and divine fertility. The seed began to grow and finally became a mighty tree, overshadowing the whole earth, and we have good reason to rejoice in it, the holy Cath-

olic Church, and to thank God for allowing us to dwell on its branches. This tree affords us welcome shade and pleasant fruit; let us thank God for them, and resolve that, no matter what may befall, nothing shall ever cut us off from the Church; our children and grandchildren shall retain the faith of our forefathers. The Church is always a living tree, preserving its youthful vigor and fruitfulness; it must continue to grow until it literally overshadows the whole world, and until there is no human being who does not dwell on its branches. Each of us can help to hasten this glorious day; we need not actually be missionaries, but we can and ought to pray that that day may come. Let us think of it particularly when we say "thy kingdom come" in the Our Father. Moreover, there may be amongst us some who do not yet enjoy the happiness of living under the shadow of our glorious Catholic Church; let us show them, by the sanctity of our lives, how good and fair a thing it is to be a Catholic. Amen.

XII. THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF CHRISTIANITY

Far away in Judea our Divine Saviour sowed a seed which sprouted and grew, until it became a mighty tree, stretching out its branches over the whole world, and the birds of the air, *i. e.*, the nations of the earth, came and dwelt under its shade. This tiny seed was Christianity, and it grew with incomprehensible rapidity, as even its adversaries admit; it grew with no natural resources, in fact, in spite of all manner of hindrances, in a truly miraculous way. The seed and the tree are plainly of Divine origin, for God alone could make an insignificant seed thrive and grow until it attained such majestic proportions.

The spread of Christianity, marvelous as it is, is not the only miracle connected with it, nor the only proof of its Divine character. What do we mean by Christianity? It behooves us to answer this question, but, before we can do so, we must examine it more closely. The essential character and force of a thing is revealed in its activity. What, may we ask, was the activity of primitive Christianity? What effect had it upon those who accepted its doctrines and obeyed its commandments? If you will listen attentively, my brethren, you will, I think, be convinced that we have here a miracle still greater than the outward extension of the Church; its effects upon individuals, families and nations reveal its power to change and transform, and this power, though less tangible and visible than its growth, is, nevertheless, an undeniable proof of the divinity of our holy religion.

1. In the short parable of the leaven our Saviour taught us what the action of Christianity would be. "The kingdom of Heaven," He said, "is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three

measures of meal, until the whole was leavened" (Matt., xiii, 33). Meal is an inert mass, composed of many grains, each cold, motionless and almost worthless. Put leaven into it and watch how it works; it seems to give life to the meal, which rises and moves as the fermentation proceeds, until at last the whole is leavened, and all the meal is bound together firmly, not a particle escapes the influence of the yeast, and it is transformed into a perfectly new substance, fit to be used as food. Meal symbolizes the human race, to which our Saviour added the leaven of His teaching, example and grace—and when the leaven had worked, the human race, previously pagan, became Christian. In order to appreciate the magnitude of the transformation, we should have to know the full misery and evil of paganism, but if I were to attempt to describe these things to you, I should have to speak of subjects unfit for mention before Christians. I need, however, only remind you of what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Romans, where he alludes to the foul desires of the heart, uncleanness, shameful passions, unnatural vice, iniquity, malice, avarice, wickedness, envy, contention and deceit. It is enough to remember that pagans as a rule were devoid of all mercy and pity and how could they be otherwise? Are not all these vices the natural outcome of the tendency to evil which the sin of our first parents implanted in every human heart? From whom could men learn anything better, or whence could they obtain moral strength to act differently? From their gods? We have only to read the writings, I will not say of the Fathers, who may be regarded as prejudiced, but of the pagan authors, *e. g.*, the dialogues in which Lucian, a pagan philosopher, depicts the thoughts and actions of these deities in accordance with the ideas of their worshippers. We find nothing but envy, jealousy, revenge, sensuality and passion. Yes, it was from their very gods that the unhappy

pagans acquired vices of which they might perhaps have been ignorant; they learned every kind of wickedness and remained devoid of mercy and pity.

Let us now consider the working of the Divine leaven—the transforming power of Christianity. Scarcely had the new leaven been brought into the world when, slowly but surely, it began to work. What was dead, awoke to a higher, supernatural life; what was fleshly, became spiritual; what was proud, became humble; enemies became friends; the hard and cruel became merciful and compassionate; the human became divine; and all this was due to the leaven of Christianity. Even the pagans could not help seeing the change. The younger Pliny, in a report sent to the Emperor Trajan, says that the Christians bound themselves by oath not to commit crimes, but to refrain from theft and adultery, and to aim at loyalty and honesty. He had himself examined them, and found them guilty of no offence save the profession of Christianity (Ep., x, 97). Lucian says of the Christians that their first legislator impressed upon them that they were all brethren; they displayed incredible activity, and where their chief interests were at stake, they shrank from no sacrifice (Peregrin, 13). Galen, a pagan physician, reports that it was a matter of everyday occurrence to see Christians facing death with more courage than any pagan philosophers would display, and he expresses great surprise at the control that they exercised over their passions, since they led pure and chaste lives in holy modesty, and many of them, men as well as women, renounced permanently even the permitted pleasures of family life (Galen. De sent. polit. Platon.). Harnack, commenting on this passage, remarks that it would hardly be possible to imagine a more unbiassed and splendid testimony to the high morality of the early Christians.

Tertullian writes: "The care that we take of the helpless, and our active charity are marks whereby our enemies recognize us. 'Behold,' they say, 'how these Christians love one another'—they themselves hate one another—and how each is ready to die for the other'—whereas they themselves are more inclined to kill one another" (Tertull. Apol., 39). Cæcilius, a pagan writer quoted by Minucius Felix, says of the Christians: "They know one another by secret signs, and love one another almost before this recognition" (Min. Fel. Oct., 9).

No wonder that the apologists of Christianity appeal to its ennobling and sanctifying power, when addressing their pagan antagonists. Justin, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria and Origen all do this. "Look," they say, "at our works, and tell us what fault you have to find with them. You persecute us, but can you convict of any real crime one of those whom you bring before your tribunals? We are rated simply because we are Christians, you can reproach us with no other offence." Men who could use such language must have been very sure of their own position. A most interesting instance of an appeal of this kind has been preserved in the so-called letter to Diognetus, the only manuscript containing it unhappily perished in the flames during the siege of Strassburg in the Franco-Prussian war. Diognetus, a pagan holding some important office, seems to have asked a Christian friend for information about Christianity. Instead of writing a learned disquisition, the friend simply described the Christians' mode of life. He writes: "Christians are not distinguished from other people by their language or country or outward customs. They do nothing extraordinary; they follow the national usage in their food and clothing—but if you study them you will see how, though they dwell on the earth, they are pilgrims bound for Heaven; they are in the flesh,

but live not according to it; they are persecuted, and love their adversaries; they are poor and make many rich; they are despised, yet they bless. Such are the Christians, or, to sum it up shortly, they are to the world what the soul is to the body. The soul preserves and animates the body, which derives all its goodness and beauty from the soul. Such are Christians and such is Christianity; in fact, God alone could teach us, and nothing but the example of a God could enable us to be what we are; in very truth, Christianity is not the work of men, but the power and strength of God have made it what it is."

2. It would be a delightful task to examine more closely the lives of the early Christians and to admire their virtues in detail. There is abundant material in the works of contemporary writers; the difficulty would be where to begin and where to end, and we should never have done. One point, however, is so conspicuous that it is, as it were, the keynote to all the passages that I have quoted. Everywhere we notice how the leaven of Christianity binds men together in charity that embraces enemies as well as friends. Our Divine Saviour Himself said: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John, xiii, 35); and: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matt., v, 44). He taught His disciples to have brotherly love for one another; He proclaimed: "Blessed are the merciful," and His actions showed His sympathy with all sufferers. His followers understood His teaching, for, St. Paul says: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor., xiii, 1), and St. John: "Let us love one another, for charity is of God. . . . God is charity" (1 John, iv, 7, 16).

If you want to see how the early Christians obeyed this law of charity, read the Acts of the Apostles, in which we are told that they were of one heart and one soul; read the epistles of St. Justin, Martyr, of which Harnack, a writer by no means enamored of Christianity, says that they contain a vast amount of charity and sympathy. Do not imagine this charity to have been blind and sickly so as to cause the poor and needy to be helped in some mistaken way, and to lead to nothing else. No, this charity was wise and discriminating. According to the earliest regulations, no man fit for work was to be supported for more than two or three days. "If he be an artisan, let him work for his food, and not be idle; if he will not, he is making Christianity a source of profit, and you should beware of such a person" (Doctr. Apost., 12). "Give work to those who are fit for work, and show mercy to those who are unfit" (Epist. Clem., 8). How was this mercy shown? Tertullian gives a beautiful account of the money collected for the support of the poor, the education of orphans and the care of the aged (Tertull. Apol., 39). The Church in Rome wrote to that in Corinth about the year 96: "Who has not experienced your hospitality? Who does not know that you would rather give than receive? Who has not heard of your well nigh insatiable desire to do good? Who is not aware that you vie with one another day and night in striving to benefit the brethren?" Pope Cornelius said that the Christian community in Rome supported 1,500 widows and persons in need of help (Euseb. Hist. eccl., vi, 43). Great kindness was shown to widows, whom Polycarp calls "the altar of God" (ad Phil. 4). On many Christian monuments in Gaul we read: "he ransomed prisoners." Aristides remarks (Apol. 15) that the Christians spoke of slaves as their brethren, whereas the pagans sometimes used them as food for their fishes. Dionysius, a bishop, thus describes the ravages of

the plague in Alexandria: "The pagans forsook those who were sickening with the disease; even their nearest and dearest they cast half-dead into the streets and left the corpses unburied. But our brethren did not shrink from danger; on the contrary they fearlessly visited and tended the sick, and many laymen, as well as priests, died in consequence" (Euseb. Hist. Eccl., vii, 22). A similar account of the great pestilence in the time of Maximinus Daza is given by Eusebius (ix, 8): "The charity of the Christians was then most plainly revealed to all pagans, who actually praised the God of the Christians, and acknowledged that His followers alone were truly good and God-fearing men."

Charity towards enemies was a virtue wholly unknown to the pagan world, but how many instances of this heroic charity, utterly impossible to unregenerate human nature, have been recorded in every century of the Christian era! Who taught St. Stephen to pray for his enemies? Who gave the saints strength to love their adversaries? We read in the Lives of the Saints of St. John Gualbert, a Florentine officer of high birth. His only brother had been killed in a quarrel, and John was full of revengeful thoughts, when one day, being himself surrounded by his men, he met his brother's murderer. He drew his sword, only to let it sink, for the murderer came up with his arms crossed upon his breast, and begged for mercy; and John remembered that it was Good Friday. "Love one another," "love your enemies," were the words frequently uttered by our Saviour, but on Good Friday He set us an example of infinite charity.

I have tried briefly to describe to you the power of Christianity to transform men's hearts. It is a theme so lofty that the tongues of angels would never weary of it. Such virtue, and above all such charity, is indeed a great miracle, and the writer of the epistle to

Diognetus might well say of the Christianity of the Second Century that it was not the work of men, but the power of God.

But, my brethren, Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and the force of Christianity has not changed during all its existence. Can we, however, truthfully assert that Christians are still the same? Should we venture to bid the opponents of Christianity consider our way of life? Are we filled with charity? I will not allude to the indescribably sad spectacle presented by those who, whilst they call themselves Christians, never cease to despise and slander the holy Catholic Church and her children. No, theirs is no true Christianity, for they have not the spirit of Christ. Let us rather look at home. How is it that our lives bear so little resemblance to those of the early Christians? Why are we so eager for amusement, so easy-going, so uncharitable towards our neighbors. We are often told that we ought to improve and are in great need of reformation—and it is true, though not in the sense in which the remark is generally made, viz., that we should do well to discourage popular devotions, and say our prayers in English. No, these are mere externals; the reform that we require is in our lives. And how is this to be effected? There is only one way, the same way that at first brought about so wonderful a transformation among men. Let us apply this method, and have recourse to the Divine leaven of our Saviour's doctrine, example and grace. This leaven must work in our hearts and in our daily life, and when it does so, we shall behold fresh miracles, and shall be like the early Christians, humble, obedient, temperate and full of active charity towards others. This is the reformation that we want, and it will be the most glorious triumph of our holy religion. Amen.

XIII. THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY

No sooner had the infant Church begun to grow, and the leaven of Christ's grace and doctrine to work, than enemies arose, anxious to destroy Christianity. They did not think that this would be a difficult task, for if once the shepherds were slain, the flock would scatter. Consequently they laid hands on the Apostles, although even this proceeding seemed hardly necessary, since Gamaliel, a man highly respected by the Jews, advised them to refrain from meddling with the Christians and said: "Let them alone; for if this 'work be of men, it will come to naught, but if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it" (Acts, v, 38). This was good advice, for men's work does not last, but soon passes away, especially if it runs counter to human pride and passion. Gamaliel was right, and it was really superfluous to persecute the Christians. Nevertheless, Christ had foretold the persecutions, and God permitted them to arise. Christians have suffered at the hands of Jews and Gentiles, and in every country and every age. They have been persecuted by the state, by the learned and by the ignorant, and it is impossible to describe all the tortures that they have endured. And for what reason? We cannot fathom all God's designs, but we acknowledge their wisdom. Gold is tried in the furnace, and Christians in suffering and affliction. Our Saviour was hated and persecuted, and the disciples must be like their Master. But there was one thing that God particularly desired the persecutions to effect, viz., to prove the impossibility of destroying Christianity. Gamaliel said: "If this work be of God, you cannot overthrow it." This is what God intended; men might bring all their cunning, hatred and violence to bear upon Christianity, and would never succeed in de-

stroying it. This fact would prove beyond all question that God was its author. The testimony of blood, the strongest and most convincing of all kinds of testimony, was to uphold the truth and divinity of Christ's teaching.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read of an occurrence that may be taken as typical of the hostility that Christianity would encounter. Some of the Jews came forward to dispute with Stephen, and as they could not resist his wisdom and spirit, they suborned men to bear false witness against him, they stirred up the people and they denounced him to the government. Finally, when Stephen defended himself they cast him forth and stoned him. We see that the enemies of Christianity begin with *words*. The Jews treated Stephen and the other disciples just as the Pharisees had treated our Saviour. They tried to show that there were contradictions in the doctrine taught, they looked upon the new religion with suspicion, as being unpatriotic and hostile to the state, and they despised the Christians as foolish and credulous. It was not long before pagans, too, came forward as opponents of Christianity. Lucian, who has been called the Greek Voltaire, held it up to ridicule in his *Peregrinus*, and spoke with the utmost scorn of Christian charity and endurance of martyrdom. He laughed at Christianity, knowing well that nothing is more deadly than derision. He was followed by others, two of whom, as Harnack says, are a host in themselves. These were Celsus and Porphyry. The former wrote two books against Christianity in which he discovered nothing good. He calls it the bastard of Judaism, the most debased of all religions. He shows great skill in representing the sects as antagonistic to the Church, and Christ as at variance with the Apostles. All that was good in Christ was, according to Celsus, borrowed from the Greek philosophers, and everything original was error and deception. He

considers the Resurrection nonsense, and faith in Divine Providence an absurd piece of presumption. Being a shrewd man, Celsus understood how to make his views sound very plausible, but Porphyry was a still more dangerous foe. St. Augustine calls him a great and learned philosopher and a bitter opponent of Christianity. He wrote fifteen books against the Christians; he displays a certain amount of respect for our Lord's person, but has an intense desire to overthrow His teaching. With vast study of Holy Scripture and inexhaustible industry, he collects everything that appears to him offensive or contradictory in the Christian religion, and evinces peculiar dislike of its teaching regarding the creation and end of the world, and our Lord's incarnation and resurrection.

What did these men effect? They did what they could, and did it as well as any of their successors. If we collect all that in subsequent ages has been said and written against our holy religion, we must confess that Celsus and Porphyry said it all, and said it, in many cases, with more intelligence and shrewdness; and yet they accomplished nothing, for they could not resist the wisdom and spirit of Christianity. Aristides, Justin, Apollinaris, Athenagoras, and above all Origen came forward as the champions of our faith, and wrote the most brilliant works in its defence, and now no one troubles about Lucian, Celsus and Porphyry, whilst every one has heard of Origen, the man of brass and steel, as he has been called, who, according to Epiphanius, wrote several thousand books in defence of Christianity. We admire him so much that we feel grateful to Celsus for having aroused such a giant. If you were to study Origen's writings, you would see how accurately he answers all his opponents' objections, and how thoroughly and cleverly he refutes them. For instance he triumphantly disproves the assertion that Christianity attaches no value to education and learning and

is a religion fit only for simpletons. He declares education and learning to be excellent things, and says that Christianity, far from depreciating them, encourages and promotes them. He skilfully turns the reproach of novelty into an argument in support of Christianity, by pointing out that, though it is not long since Christ founded His Church, no mere human being could possibly have accomplished so much in so short a time. He challenges any one to convert even a hundred persons from vice and wantonness, and make them good and virtuous, yet Christianity has, he says, succeeded in transforming countless multitudes, in spite of the most stubborn opposition on the part of emperors, rulers, generals and governors in towns and also among the people. Christianity triumphed everywhere, and thousands of converts were made in Greece and in every country of the world. Does not this prove that it must be of Divine origin? (Orig. c. Celsum 3, 48; 1, 26 sq.). When we read words like these we are filled with confidence and assurance. If new enemies come forward to assail Christianity, individuals among us, being ignorant of history, may feel alarm, but we know that our foes can do nothing; even such men as Harnack and Haeckel are pigmies in comparison with Celsus and Porphyry, and their arguments have long ago been refuted by Origen and other Fathers of the Church. Let them therefore do their worst; we need not be afraid, and may boldly tell them that they are too late; all their statements were made ages ago by men who were unable to resist the wisdom and spirit of Christianity. No philosopher or scholar has ever destroyed, or ever will destroy, the Church of Christ; all that her enemies attempt adds to her triumph, since Christianity comes from God, and is not the work of men.

In his latest work Harnack speaks of his predecessors, Celsus and Porphyry as if he almost regretted their failure to destroy

Christianity; he accounts for their want of success by saying that no professor can triumphantly resist a universal religion like Christianity, unless indeed he wields the sword as well as the pen of a reformer (*Die Mission*, p. 356). Neither Celsus nor Porphyry wielded the sword, nor, happily, does Professor Harnack wield it; but have not many other foes used it against Christianity? The Jews, being unable to refute what St. Stephen said, nevertheless began to persecute the early Church, for they imprisoned the Apostles and stirred up both the Roman governors and the populace against them. It is a remarkable fact that to the present day wherever the most virulent attacks have been made upon Christianity, Jews have always had something to do with them, and they found apt pupils in the pagans!

You surely have heard of the terrible persecutions during the first few centuries; as many as thirty Popes suffered martyrdom, and we learn horrible details from the Acts of the Martyrs and the writings of the Fathers. Nero accused the Christians of setting Rome on fire, and many were covered with pitch and burnt as torches in his gardens; he also caused St. Paul to be beheaded and St. Peter to be crucified. Trajan had no desire to hunt out the Christians, but he put them to death if accusations were brought against them and they refused to deny their faith. It was in Trajan's reign that St. Ignatius was thrown to the wild beasts. Hadrian empowered the Roman governors to execute Christians simply on the ground of their faith. Marcus Aurelius went further and authorized the tracking down of Christians; it was in his reign that St. Polycarp was burnt to death. Decius carried on a vigorous persecution, aimed particularly at the bishops. Valerian used to exile priests in the first instance, but, because that did not silence them, he ordered them to be slain. Christian officials were removed, deprived of their

property and beheaded. It was in this reign that St. Cyprian and St. Lawrence, the deacon, died as martyrs. The most merciless persecution of all took place under Diocletian, who issued four edicts of gradually increasing severity against Christians. Many had their legs broken, others were burnt, others flayed alive; fresh tortures were constantly devised, and the executioners were exhausted, so great was the number of victims. People of all ranks perished, but especially aristocrats and women; we read of the martyrdom of Agnes, Lucy, Anastasia, Afra and many others. The persecution spread to all parts of the Empire. Thousands perished whose names have not come down to us, although some are recorded in the Roman Martyrology.

If Christianity had been of merely human origin, it would have been uprooted, but, as it was, these persecutions effected nothing. Many Christians were slain, but many others at once took their places; churches were destroyed, and the faithful had to hide in the Catacombs, but no sooner had the persecution ceased for a while, than they came forth and rebuilt their temples, making them more beautiful than before. We may even assert that Christianity benefited by persecution, which not only lopped off dead branches and purged away false doctrines, but also promoted the external growth of the Church in a very wonderful manner. A farmer, who wishes to increase his seed corn, plants it in the earth. This is a symbol of the Church, regarding which Tertullian writes very beautifully (Apol., 50): "You may torture and rack us, but what does your cruelty avail? The more you mow us down, the more does our number increase. The blood of martyrs trickles from their mangled bodies and falls on to the fruitful soil of the Church, where it brings forth fresh Christians: *Semen est sanguis Christianorum.*" Yes, the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church—it has ever

been the most glorious evidence of the truth of Christianity, and furnishes, as St. Augustine says, a threefold testimony to it. One witness may believe in Christ, but hardly have courage so much as to whisper His name; another believes and boldly confesses his belief; a third, besides believing and confessing, actually dies for Christ's sake. The testimony of the third is the greatest of all (Augustine, *Sermo* 286). The testimony of blood has a marvelous effect. Think again of St. Stephen; among those who stoned him, one was conspicuous for his violence, and he guarded the clothes of the rest, because, as St. Augustine says, he desired thus to cast stones by the hands of all who stoned Stephen (Augustine, *Sermo* 14 de Sanctis). Did Saul not heed the sight of the saint borne down by the heavy stones? Had his prayer for his enemies no effect? We can judge for ourselves—for Saul was soon afterwards converted and became Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Stephen's death was indeed precious; the martyr's triumph was glorious! A simple deacon died, and by his death bestowed upon the world the great Apostle, who converted thousands to Christianity. Was not in this case the martyr's blood the seed of fresh Christians? And the same story was repeated again and again. When a Christian was about to suffer, the pagans assembled, partly out of curiosity, partly to satisfy their desire for bloodshed. They saw these men, who were always in danger of death, standing calmly to receive their sentence; they heard their fearless profession of faith, and saw them enduring most terrible tortures with patience, whereas the utterance of a single word would have secured their freedom. Not men alone, but women, children and maidens suffered martyrdom. St. Ignatius actually longed to encounter the wild beasts, and St. Lawrence jested as he was being roasted to death. Must not the spectators, if they were capable of serious reflection, have said to themselves: "A relig-

ion with such witnesses, a faith imparting such courage and steadfastness, must be good"? Would they not eventually arrive at the conclusion that Christianity owed its origin to God, and not to men? St. Jerome writes: "Anyone who has witnessed the heroism of the martyrs under torture, and their exultation in the midst of their sufferings, must perceive how the sweet fragrance of a true knowledge of God arises from their blood, and must realize in the secret recesses of his heart the truth of the Gospel, since otherwise men would not defend it with their lives." *Semen est sanguis Christianorum*. New Christians spring up from the martyrs' blood, and their testimony is the strongest and most convincing proof of the truth of Christianity.

Yes, Christianity is absolutely unconquerable; neither the skill of unbelievers nor the violence of the rabble can overthrow it, and we know that this must be the case, for our Divine Redeemer promised that the gates of hell should never prevail against His Church. The promise was made in the first instance to St. Peter, His immediate successor, and it is written in letters of gold round the dome of St. Peter's in Rome, above the Apostle's tomb. It is well for us often to call this promise to mind, since Christianity still has many enemies, who would fain destroy it and make it vanish from the face of the earth; but we feel no alarm, because we know it to be invincible, since it is Divine. Our forefathers rejoiced when they were called upon to shed their blood for the faith. It is an honor for us to be the descendants of martyrs; would that we always acted in accordance with this dignity! *Non magna loquimur, sed magna vivimus*, exclaims St. Cyprian—our deeds, and not our words, are great. This should be the aim of every Christian now, as it was during the persecutions; but alas, we still hear the cry: *panem et circenses*, give us food and amusements—it behooves us, as Chris-

tians, to show that we have higher ideals, and do not shrink from pain and the cross, under whatever form we may have to bear it. There is much indifference towards the doctrines and commandments of Christianity, some are too careless, others too cowardly, to acknowledge their faith. Let us Catholics, the descendants of martyrs, never forget our glorious forefathers, but regard our holy faith as our most precious treasure, professing the same proudly and joyfully both in deed and in word, but especially in deed, for words alone are not enough. *Magna vivimus*, yes, great, heroic deeds befit all who are worthy to be called Christians. Amen.

XIV. A MARTYRDOM

Our religion comes from God, who has Himself, by means of prophecies and miracles, signed and sealed the documents relating to its foundation. The Church resembled a tiny grain of mustard seed at first, but speedily developed into a mighty tree, and like leaven, working in men's hearts, she soon converted the nations to Christianity. She accomplished this in spite of much opposition, and the enemies of Christianity have furnished us with the best evidence of its Divine origin, since they called into being so many Christian apologists and martyrs. As we have seen, the blood of martyrs supplies the strongest and most convincing evidence in support of our holy faith; it is indeed, as Tertullian says, the seed of Christians.¹

We discussed this subject last time, but it is worth while to return to it, and let it sink deeply into our hearts. Let us to-day consider a group of martyrs, and try to picture them before our eyes, and listen to their very words. A little book, that has come down to us from the Third Century, contains the account of the martyrdom of St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas. It is not merely a gem of early Christian literature, but it would be difficult to discover anywhere a more touching work, or one more full of poetical beauty. It was valued very highly in the early Church, and St. Augustine tells us that in the Fifth Century it used to be read aloud to the faithful at public worship. He himself preached no less than three sermons on it. Its chief value consists in the fact that the greater part of it was written by St. Perpetua, whose martyrdom it records, on the eve of her death. Let us transport ourselves in thought to a

prison in Carthage, where five people are assembled, some of them being easily recognizable as slaves. In their midst is St. Perpetua, a young woman of 22, whose dress and bearing show that she is of noble birth. In her arms she holds a little child, baptized not many days before. Let us listen to what she is saying: "I shuddered when we entered the prison, for never had I been in such darkness and heat, and outside was the noise of the soldiers guarding us. I was consumed with anxiety about my child, until at last we were permitted to spend a few hours in a better and more airy place. Everyone thought of himself, but I thought only of my child, and fed him as best I could, fearing very much for his life, since he was visibly wasting away. I commended him to the care of my mother, who came to visit us, but I could not part with him, and took him back with me to prison. He grew better, and my relief was so great that the prison seemed preferable to a palace." This is a plain and simple story, my brethren, but infinitely touching. This aristocratic lady was content to be with slaves, and happy in her gloomy prison. She loved her child too tenderly to give him up, and yet she saw him languish in confinement. What gave her courage to endure her lot? She was a Christian and if she had denied her faith, she would at once have been set at liberty; but she refused to utter this word, and rejoiced at being permitted to suffer such insults and ill-treatment for her religion. Does not this show how much strength and courage Christianity can impart?

Perpetua's father, who was still a pagan, had done his best to induce his daughter to recant; she asked him: "Father, seest thou the vessel yonder?" he answered: "Yes." "Can we give it a different name than that which it bears?" "No." "Well then, I am a Christian and cannot be called by any other name." The father was angry, and so far forgot himself as to strike his daughter, but

afterwards he visited her in prison. She relates how he came in, broken down with sorrow, and said: "My child, have pity upon my gray hairs; have pity upon thy father, if indeed I am still thy father. Remember all that I have done for thee and how I favored thee above thy brothers. Bring not such disgrace upon me, thy mother and thy whole family. Save thyself for the sake of the child, who cannot live without thee." "And then," she goes on, "he kissed my hands, and cast himself down before me, weeping and sobbing. O what anguish did I feel! but I composed myself, and said: "Father, take courage; what God wills, must be done, we are in His hand." Then in deep distress he left me, and on the following day we were taken before the judge, and lo! my father was there, with my child in his arms. He came up to me and said: "Have pity on thy child and do sacrifice." The pagan governor, too, said: "Have mercy on thy father's gray hairs and on thy little child, and make an offering to the gods." I replied: "I cannot." Then the judge asked: "Art thou therefore a Christian?" and I answered: "Yes, I am a Christian." My father still stood there, and as he would not withdraw, the judge ordered him to be expelled and struck with a rod. O what pain did that cause me! more than if I myself had been struck. My poor old father! We were condemned to be cast to the wild beasts, and joyfully returned to the prison. I wished to take my child with me, in order to feed him, but they refused me permission, and lo, by God's merciful providence, the child from that moment no longer craved his mother's breast, and I was comforted."

There is another episode, which we cannot pass over at a time like the present, when we are thinking so much of dear ones who have passed away. One night Perpetua had a dream in which she saw her youngest brother Dinocrates; he seemed to be shut up in

some dark place, and was trying to draw water from a well, in order to quench his thirst; but he could never reach the water, as the wall round the well was too high. Perpetua was distressed at this dream, and prayed for her brother, and soon after in another dream she saw him again, but this time he was wearing gorgeous robes, and was radiant with health and strength. Again he approached the well, took a golden cup that lay ready, and, bending over the water, filled the cup and drank; then he gaily passed on out of sight. Perpetua perceived that Dinocrates had been delivered from Purgatory by her prayers.

At last the day came for her release from suffering. She stood in the arena, with downcast eyes, praying in silence. She and her companion Felicitas were stripped of their outer garments and wrapped in nets, and then a wild bull rushed at her and tossed her high in the air. She fell to the ground, drawing her undergarment about her, because, as we read, she cared more for modesty than about pain. Her hair flowed loose about her shoulders, and she knotted it up, thinking it unfit for a martyr, at the hour of her triumph, to have her hair unbound as if she were in mourning. Then, taking Felicitas by the hand, she rose once more to her feet, and, beholding her friends, she cried out to them: "Stand fast in the faith." At last the executioner came up and drew his sword. Perpetua stretched out her neck and received the mortal stroke. Picture the scene, my brethren, and if you have opportunity, read the book for yourselves.

Perpetua was a true woman, full of tender anxiety about her child and of compassion for her brother in his sorrow. How great was her love for her father, and how bitterly she grieved at the sight of his tears and the insults heaped upon him! Was there ever a better mother, a more loving daughter and sister? Perpetua

was all this in spite of being a Christian, nay rather, because she was a Christian. No such woman can be found among the pagans. The faith and law of Christ never destroy what is good and noble and sacred in the human heart, but they perfect it, rendering it divine. Consider Perpetua's courage; she was a weak, timid woman, thrust into the awful darkness of a filthy prison. On the one hand were the strongest natural feelings, love of child and parents, and on the other the most terrible agony and death. There could not be a more painful struggle between inclination and duty, nor could a greater sacrifice be demanded of any one. When Coriolanus was besieging Rome, the priests came out to ask for mercy, then his own wife and children, but he was inflexible. Finally his old mother came to him, and he gave way; "Mother," he cried, "thou hast saved Rome, but lost thy son." Perpetua was stronger than Coriolanus. Before her stood her aged father, with her infant son in his arms, weeping, sobbing, and imploring her to recant, and her heart must have been almost broken; yet she did not waver. She loved her father and her child above everything in the world, but she loved God infinitely more; and she could not be false to Him. She had heard the words: "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me" (Matt., x, 37). She followed her Saviour's example, and His grace, purchased with His precious Blood, gave her strength to make a sacrifice such as no natural courage would have enabled her to make. Is not Christianity able to effect marvels?

The martyrs acknowledged frankly and plainly that they bore their sufferings for the sake of Christ, their Lord and God, and that their death was a testimony to the divine origin of Christianity. St. Ignatius, before his martyrdom, was asked why he called him-

self Theophorus, the bearer of God, and he replied that it was because he bore within him Christ, who is God. When Polycarp was urged to renounce Christ, he turned his eyes to heaven, and said: "I have served Him for 86 years, and never has He done me any harm; how can I be disloyal to Him." You have heard how Perpetua answered: "I cannot offer sacrifice; for I am a Christian." Notice the words: I cannot. They mean: You may shut me up in a dark prison, you may shed my blood, my father may curse me, my child may be torn from me, my heart may break; but I cannot offer sacrifice; I am a Christian. Perpetua spoke thus to her father, to the Roman governor, and to the pagan rabble. After she had been tossed by the furious bull, after the sword had pierced her, her blood still proclaimed her a Christian. What a glorious testimony for Christ!

The martyrs died for Christ, and He triumphed in them; to Him be the honor and glory! And what was the result of their victory? St. Augustine tells us that we ourselves are the result. Just as Christ died for us, so did the martyrs die; their blood was poured out on the earth, and from the furrows thus fertilized sprang up an abundant harvest of Christians. O let us ever rejoice and exult in them! If we acknowledge Christ to be our Lord and God, if He is our Teacher and Guide through life's pilgrimage and will hereafter be our reward, if we, in short, are Christians at all, we owe it in a great degree to the martyrs and the testimony borne by them to Christ and His Church. The people of Jerusalem spread their garments in our Lord's way, but the martyrs laid, as it were, their own bodies on the road to the heavenly Jerusalem, in order that their divine master might pass over them and enter His kingdom in triumph. "Let us," says St. Augustine, "not fail to pluck at least some branches from the trees by the wayside; *i. e.*,

to derive some benefit from the martyrs' teaching and example, and to join their cry of Hosanna" (*Sermo* 280).

My Brethren, we profess the same faith, and like St. Perpetua we can exclaim: "We are Christians." But it is not enough to be baptized; it behooves us also to stand firm in the faith, as St. Perpetua exhorted her friends to do. She and all the other holy martyrs urge us to stand firm in the faith, and their voices should not fall on deaf ears. The Catholic faith does not demand of us sacrifices such as those made by Perpetua and the other martyrs, who gave up everything and even life itself for it, but still we, too, must make our little sacrifices, and overcome our love of comfort, self-indulgence, indifference and human respect. It may be that even this will cost some of us dear, but what of that? We are Christians; we must stand firm in the faith. Men and women, remember Perpetua, and do not let yourselves be put to shame by one so frail and timid as she was. The Christian faith, that inspired and strengthened her, will bestow on you also power and courage to profess your religion fearlessly and to live in accordance with its precepts.

XV. AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

God and man, united chiefly by love—this is religion; it is strictly in conformity with nature and a matter of course, but it is also indispensable, if man is to attain his final end and to live an honest life. Just as there is only one God, so is there only one true religion, and the idea that it is quite indifferent which creed one professes, is foolish and sinful. But which is the true religion? Surely that which God has revealed, not one discovered in nature or in the voice of conscience alone, but the one which, as St. Paul says, God has revealed at various times through the prophets, and finally through His Son Jesus Christ. This supernatural revelation is possible, it is most beneficial to us, and absolutely necessary on account of the supernatural aim assigned us by God. It has actually taken place, and this is a fact as certain as anything recorded in history; it is guaranteed and proved by the prophecies and miracles, which were the credentials of those commissioned by God to convey it to us, and the supreme testimony to its genuineness is the greatest of all miracles, the glorious resurrection of Christ. Additional evidence is supplied by the religion founded and perfected by Christ, and by the influence over Christendom of this religion, which we have seen to be miraculous in its growth, its transforming power and its indestructibility. Finally there is the unmistakable testimony of the blood shed by Christ's followers for His sake.

We have considered all these great and important truths, and confirmed our conviction of the truth of our holy religion, and at the same time have kindled within our hearts a more ardent affection for the Catholic faith.

To-day we have to answer a fresh question: Where do we dis-

cover divine revelation? Whence do we derive in all their integrity the truths that God has taught us, and the commandments that He bids us keep? From your childhood you have known the answer to this question—the sources of revelation are Holy Scripture and the oral tradition of the Church. To speak first of the former:—how are we to be sure of the authenticity of the books contained in the Bible? are they genuine? can we believe that they are, as the Church asserts, divinely inspired? What can be said for or against modern criticism of these books? What about the Bible and natural science? Finally, what is the attitude of the Catholic Church towards Holy Scripture? All these are very important questions, constantly asked at the present time, and we ought to know how to answer them.

To-day let us discuss the authenticity of the Bible. We cannot consider each of the 45 books of the Old and the 26 books of the New Testament separately, nor is it necessary; it will suffice for our purpose if we fix our attention upon the four Gospels, since they contain the chief doctrines taught in the other books, most of which are mentioned in the Gospels. We regard a work as genuine, if it was really written by the author to whom it is ascribed, or at least dates from the period when it professes to have been compiled. We must see therefore whether the four Gospels were really written by the four men, who either themselves claim to be the authors, or at least are believed by all Christians to have been such.

1. The first of these men is Matthew, a tax collector in the neighborhood of Genesareth. He tells us himself that Jesus, seeing him, said: "Follow me," and Matthew rose up and followed Him. Matthew listened to our Lord's sermons and witnessed His

miracles, and with the other apostles received the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. Afterwards he preached first in Galilee, and then in Ethiopia, but before quitting Palestine he deposited with his countrymen there the record of his chief instructions. This book is the one that we know as the Gospel according to St. Matthew, and it was written perhaps as early as the year 42, and certainly before 65 A. D.. It was written originally in Hebrew, but was translated into Greek during the apostle's lifetime. He wrote primarily for Jewish converts to Christianity and, therefore, he assumes his readers to be familiar with the customs and localities of the Holy Land and with the Old Testament prophecies. His great aim is to prove Jesus Christ to be the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and to show that Judaism, which was intended to prepare His way, had now lost its significance.

The second Gospel is called that of St. Mark, who was one of St. Peter's disciples, accompanied him on his journeys, and was commissioned by him to found the church in Alexandria. The Gospel was written in Rome about the year 65. St. Mark gives us much information, derived from St. Peter, regarding our Lord's words and works; and apparently he took especial pains to impress upon his readers, the Christians in Rome, with how much truth St. Peter had exclaimed: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt., xvi, 16).

The third evangelist is St. Luke, who was originally a pagan physician, and after his conversion became St. Paul's companion. He wrote his Gospel about the year 65, his aim being to preserve the Apostle's oral instructions in writing, for the benefit of all his converts, but particularly for the Greeks, and consequently St. Luke employed very carefully selected Greek expressions. His Gospel

is the historical development of the great truth stated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (i, 16): "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and to the Greek; for the justice of God is revealed therein from faith unto faith."

The fourth Gospel is that according to St. John; it was written in Ephesus about the year 96, and was intended to supplement the three other Gospels, with which St. John was undoubtedly acquainted. He emphasizes the fact that he had himself been an eyewitness of the events recorded. "We saw his glory" (i, 14); "That which we have seen and have heard, we declare unto you" (1 John, i, 3). At the time when he wrote there were already heretics who denied the Divinity of Christ, and so St. John rises, as it were, like an eagle soaring above the things of earth, and relates what had been revealed to him above. "In the beginning was the Word" that became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." St. John was, as he himself tells us, the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who leaned on our Lord's bosom at the last supper. Hence he knew his Master's goodness and mercy better than anyone else, and in extreme old age he, remembering this love, never wearied of repeating: "My little children, love one another."

These are our gospels; I need not describe their contents, for you know them well enough, and have been familiar with them since you were at school. Every Sunday you hear a passage from one of them read aloud, and the sermon is often an explanation of it. No doubt you occasionally read the Bible, and especially the Gospels, for yourselves, and can appreciate their dignity and simplicity, their unity preserved among a variety of detail. As St. Irenæus

says, we have a fourfold Gospel, but one spirit pervading it, and everything speaks to us of Christ, our Saviour, revealing Him as God, and teaching us to love Him.

2. You must not expect me to quote all that learned men have written to prove the authenticity of these Gospels. Who could question it, unless he desired at all costs to deny it? The Gospels speak for themselves, their language and style, the statements regarding places, opinions and historical events, all show them to be the work of eyewitnesses. We possess very ancient manuscripts that we value very highly, and scholars rejoice whenever a fresh one is discovered, and often blindly accept its testimony as true. This is the case with the works of all ancient writers, but of the Gospels there exist many very old manuscripts, no less than 540 of St. Matthew's Gospel, nearly 600 of St. Mark's, 530 of St. Luke's, and about the same number of St. John's. The oldest manuscripts are the *Codex Vaticanus*, the *Codex Sinaiticus*, discovered in 1859, and the *Codex Syro-Sinaiticus*, discovered in 1892; all of which belong to the fourth Century. In times of persecution attempts were made to destroy the sacred books of the Christians, as well as the Christians themselves, but it was all in vain. It is interesting to note how comparatively few manuscripts of the famous pagan authors have come down to us, although no one questions the authenticity of their works. Of Vergil there is but one manuscript of the 4th or 5th century; the earliest manuscript of Horace dates from the 8th, of Plato from the 9th, of Homer and Herodotus from the 10th century. Moreover there are very early translations of the Gospels; one in Latin and one in Syriac belong to the 2nd, Coptic translations to the 3rd, Ethiopian to the 4th; and the great Gothic translation by Bishop Ulfilas to the 5th century. This

last is known as the *Codex argenteus*, and during the Thirty Years' War it was taken by the Swedes to Upsala. Further we have the evidence of the Fathers, some of whom were the disciples of the Apostles themselves. There is scarcely a verse in the Bible, and especially in the Gospels, that is not quoted by them, and quoted more than once, so that, if all our Bibles were to perish, they could be reconstructed from the writings of the Fathers. For instance, St. Irenæus of Lyons was separated by one generation only from the apostolic age. Not many of his works have come down to us, but in the fragments that remain there are about 400 references to the Gospels, as we know them. In one passage he alludes to the four evangelists by name, and says: "Just as there are four regions of the heavens, and four quarters whence the wind blows, so are there four Gospels, forming pillars on which rests our Church, that extends over the whole world. These Gospels stand fast, and it is a new and irresistible proof of their authenticity that even their enemies, the teachers of heresy, testify to it, since each tries to establish his heretical doctrine by appealing to the Gospels. Woe to him who tampers with them" (Iren. Adv. haer. iii, 11).

There is no need of further evidence; one fact alone suffices. The Gospel is the legal code of the Church, and she is convinced that she received it through the Apostles, and she has continued to regard it as a most precious treasure. It is not a private but official document. The Church has ever looked upon it as such, and as her own peculiar possession, which might not be given to pagans. She placed it in the hands of her own children, and taught them from its pages the truths necessary for salvation; her bishops watched over its purity and only such as had been properly ordained were permitted to read it publicly at divine worship. Justin Mar-

tyr writes: "On Sunday all assemble, both townsfolk and peasants, and the records of the Apostles and the books of the prophets are read aloud, and when the reader has finished, the president gives an address, exhorting his hearers to practise this good teaching" (Justin, Apol. i, 67). No one questions the authenticity of the laws of his own country, and it is equally impossible to doubt that of the Gospels. There are of course books which are not genuine, such as the so-called Gospel of St. Peter. These books were, as a rule, written with good intentions, and for a time, and especially in out of the way places, enjoyed a certain reputation, but they were spurious, and consequently the Church rejected them. When Serapion, a bishop, heard that St. Peter's Gospel was being read, he at once strictly forbade its use, and wrote: "We, my brethren, accept Peter and the other Apostles as we accept Christ Himself, but we reject what falsely bears their names" (Euseb. Hist. eccl., v, 12). A man would have to be a fool, as Irenæus says, to deny the authenticity of the Gospels.

The children of the Church have always revered these holy books, and at the time of Diocletian they preferred to die rather than give them up to unbelievers. The greatest care was taken to prevent any alteration in the text. A very striking illustration of this care is given by St. Jerome and St. Augustine. In the book of Jonas we read how the prophet, in his weariness of life, lay down to sleep outside the city of Ninive, and God caused a plant to grow over his head to shelter him. In Hebrew this plant is called *kikajon*, which in the early Greek and Latin translations is rendered by words meaning *gourd*. St. Jerome thought that it was not a gourd, but a kind of ivy, and translated the Hebrew by *ephera*. His translation was read aloud in an African church, and St. Augus-

tine tells us that the people, who had always heard that Jonas slept under a gourd, on hearing the new word were astonished and raised a great uproar, so that the bishop was in danger of expulsion, and felt obliged to consult the Jews in the town about the real signification of the Hebrew word, and then, acting on their information, restored the old rendering, *gourd*, as more correct than *ivy*. In St. Jerome's opinion the disturbance was due to an absurd trifle, for the difference between a gourd and ivy is unimportant, but the Christians thought otherwise; they were peculiarly sensitive where their sacred books were concerned, and would not have them altered. No treasure has ever been more jealously guarded by both Church and people, for they know that God has entrusted to their charge the precious books in which He Himself has recorded His word and commandments.

There is no reasonable possibility of doubting the authenticity and the apostolic origin of the Gospels. Men are easily enough satisfied in other respects, and credulous, when it pleases them. At the present day Buddhism finds many adherents, and Buddhist communities have been formed in some large cities. What can be said for the authenticity of the books about Buddha? Who wrote them? When did the authors live? No one can say, but they certainly lived long after Buddha himself. These books come from India, a land where men's imaginations run wild, and there is no guarantee that the text has been accurately preserved, or that the copyists have not tampered with it. Max Müller declared that these works were not trustworthy, and another scholar goes so far as to say that in other matters a historian would be ashamed to treat them as genuine sources of information. In comparison with these, our Gospels appear perfectly authentic; they were written in the

centres of civilization by men who actually heard and saw what they record, and were read by thousands who had witnessed the occurrences described in these books. No one doubts their authenticity except a few persons, who question it because they do not like the doctrines and commandments contained in the Gospels. No book in the world is so unquestionably genuine as the Bible, and no fact in history is supported by such irrefutable evidence as the apostolic origin of our Gospels. Amen.

XVI. CREDIBILITY OF THE GOSPELS

The Gospels resemble a mighty stream, and the books of the Old Testament are its tributaries, whilst the books of the New Testament are like fountains fed by its water. Whatever the Church teaches us as a truth revealed by God, is derived primarily from this stream, of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse (xxii, 1), saying: "He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." Therefore for us everything depends upon the Gospels being really what the Church declares them to be. We saw last time that they were genuine and that their text was not corrupt.

At the present day copies of the Gospels are in the hands of thousands, and they are officially read in every church; do you think it would be possible for some man to come forward with an unknown book, perhaps of his own composition, and to say that it had been written by one of the four evangelists? Could he even alter a single sentence in the Gospels, and maintain that the evangelist had originally written it thus? No, of course such a proceeding would be impossible now, and it was equally impossible 1800 years ago. Ever since the end of the first century the authenticity and accuracy of the Gospels have been unquestionable.

"But," some one may say, "are we bound to believe what they contain?" To you, who know them to have been written under divine inspiration, this question seems superfluous and even blasphemous, for, when God speaks, can man venture to ask whether His words are worthy of belief? Let us however for the moment disregard the divine inspiration of the Gospels, and look at them simply as historical records, compiled by ordinary men; we shall

still find them to be more trustworthy than any other books in the world.

1. It is no new thing for the enemies of Christianity to doubt the trustworthiness of the Bible, and it is well for us not to lose sight of this fact. In the 2nd Century Celsus and Julian the Apostate asserted that the Gospel narrative had been invented by the disciples of Christ and the evangelists, simply in order to deceive others. This assertion was made again in the 18th Century by Reimar, who added that Christians were like parrots, ready to repeat whatever falsehood was told them. Some unbelievers however thought that Reimar went too far, and this statement was condemned even by Strauss, who considered that the miraculous events, recorded in the Gospels, had their origin, not in any intentional deception, but in poetical legends. The Romans told wonderful stories of Jupiter, the Greeks of Zeus, and the Germans of Wodan, but nobody imagines these tales to be true, they are simply myths or beautiful poetical legends. Strauss took the same view of the Gospel account of our Lord's life and miracles. Others reject this theory, because myths and legends originate only in prehistoric ages, and what is told us of Jesus belongs to a period, the history of which is particularly well known. These critics suggest that we need not trouble about miracles, since they admit of a perfectly natural explanation. When we hear that Jesus raised the dead to life, they were not really dead, but only in a trance. When the demoniac was cured in the land of the Gerasenes, we are told that the man only imagined himself to be possessed. At that rate the 2,000 swine into whom the devil entered, after being cast out of the man, must also have imagined that they were possessed, or they would not have rushed into the sea!

We read in the Gospel how Christ told Peter to cast his line into

the sea, and in the mouth of the first fish caught would be found a stater, the coin required for the tribute money. Paulus explains this to mean that the Apostle was to catch a fish, carry it to market, and sell it for a stater; he would have to open its mouth in order to take out his hook; or else perhaps he was to open his own mouth and shout out that he had a fish for sale. Explanations such as these do not satisfy other critics, who consider the matter rather more complicated, and have recourse sometimes to one, sometimes to another method of accounting for the miracles in the Gospels. Occasionally they discover what they call a legend arising out of the limited intellectual capacity or the momentary mental attitude of a spectator. Where they light upon a passage that is not to their taste, such as the angel's message, affirming the miraculous birth of the Redeemer, or the words: "Baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," in which the mystery of the three divine Persons is mentioned, they pronounce it spurious, and call it an interpolation. "What," they ask, "is the use of all these details? What does the doctrine of the Incarnation matter? One thing only is essential—the fact that God is our loving Father. It is quite possible that our Saviour's hearers, and even the evangelists, may not have understood Him correctly, and hence it is conceivable that the Christianity of Christ differed from that of the Bible and the early Christians." Harnack speaks in this strain, and so does Abbé Loisy, who, with wonderful self-effacement, boasts of simply transcribing the assertions of German infidels.

2. You see, my Brethren, that there are many who deny the trustworthiness of our Gospels, and their reasons for doing so are very various. Some declare that there are contradictions in the Gospel narrative, and that the evangelists give conflicting accounts of the same occurrence. This statement is by no means true; there

are indeed differences, but there are no contradictions. St Augustine says: "If two historians describe the same event, and the one notices one point, the other another; if the one writes in great detail and the other more concisely, surely no one would say that they contradict each other and are not speaking the truth." Again: two artists may paint the portrait of one and the same person; they may be equally skilful, but the likenesses that they produce are not identical, being the work of two different men, each of whom depicts what strikes him most in the features, bearing and dress of his model. The two portraits are both good and faithful likenesses, but they are different; there is however no contradiction between them.

Let us apply these arguments to the Gospels. We have here four artists, the four evangelists, all of whom depict the same subject; their work differs, but it is not therefore false or contradictory. The fact that their descriptions vary, is, as St. John Chrysostom rightly points out, a proof of their honesty. "If they had related everything in precisely the same way, with the same details of time, place and circumstance, we should be justified in suspecting them of a plot to deceive us. But, as it is, the very diversity of their accounts bears testimony to their trustworthiness" (Chrysost. in Matth. hom. 1, 2).

Other critics object to the stories of miracles, and ask whether miracles are possible. This is the point that arouses the indignation of unbelievers, who, because they dislike miracles, reject the whole Bible. They assert miracles to be impossible, but no one has proved this to be the case, and, as we have already seen, God, being Almighty, can dispense with His creatures and the forces of nature, and can Himself effect whatever He wishes; therefore miracles are certainly possible. We have considered also the significance of

miracles, and have seen that without them Christianity would be impossible, and, unless the Holy Scriptures, that contain the account of the origin of Christianity, contained also an account of miracles, they would not be worthy of belief. Hence the fact that they record miracles is the grandest proof of the trustworthiness of our sacred books, because it is a proof that comes from God.

We need not, however, waste time over the enemies of the Gospels; they fail to agree, and this alone is enough to condemn them; they even contradict one another, and consequently cannot all be right. We read in the book of Daniel that when the two elders had brought a false charge against Susanna, Daniel questioned them separately, and asked under what kind of tree they had seen her. One replied: "Under a mastic tree," and the other: "Under a holm tree." Daniel thus found out that they were lying, and told them that their own falsehood had brought destruction upon them.

When we ask men why they refuse to accept the Gospels, some answer that it is because the evangelists are deceivers; others maintain that they are not deceivers, but simply collectors of legends; others again declare that they were ignorant people, unable to see or hear well, and scarcely aware of what they were saying. You see how these critics contradict one another, and thus show their statements to be false. Holy Scripture is unaffected by their assertions, and its truth cannot be gainsaid.

3. There is however other evidence that we can adduce in support of the trustworthiness of Holy Scripture. We trust a historian who, having opportunities of knowing his subject, intends to record it. Very well; the evangelists were certainly in a position to know about our Lord. Matthew was His constant companion, John was His favorite disciple, Mark and Luke associated with St. Peter and St. Paul. The events recorded took place publicly, and were ob-

served by many witnesses, including some who were hostile and suspicious. Our Saviour wished His Apostles to bear testimony to Him, because, as He said, they were with Him from the beginning, and they declare emphatically that they saw and heard what they wrote down. St. Luke says that he "diligently attained to all things from the beginning," and St. John writes: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled . . . we declare unto you" (I John i, 1, 2). The evangelists intended to record what they knew, as we can see from their mode of writing, which is plain and accurate, even in unimportant matters. For instance St. Luke tells us that our Saviour left His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and went on "a stone's cast"; also that Peter cut off Malchus' *right* ear. Details of this kind can be given only by eyewitnesses, or by those who have gathered them from eyewitnesses. Matthew and Luke give our Saviour's genealogy, even at the risk of making mistakes. Luke fixes very precisely the date when the word of the Lord came upon St. John in the desert; it was in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod tetrarch of Galilee—no one writes so precisely who does not intend to be honest and tell the truth. Matthew says that Herod, hearing about the wise men," was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and he assembled together all the chief priests and scribes, etc." If this had been false, anyone, who happened to have been in Jerusalem at the time, would at once protest that he had never heard of the wise men's coming. I might refer to dozens of similar passages, but it is not necessary; the evangelists were sure of their facts, and simply put them on record. If they had not been honest men, would they have told us so frankly of their own blunders and those of their friends? would they have related instances of their

own dullness, vanity, jealousy, timidity and cowardice? The very word "publican" has something derogatory about it; no one applies it to Matthew, but Matthew describes himself as a publican! How simply are the most astounding events, such as raising the dead, recorded! There is considerable reserve, and almost incredulity displayed with reference to miracles, and no secret is made of St. Thomas's want of faith. We cannot doubt that the evangelists were honest, when we read what they wrote.

Moreover it would have been absolutely impossible for them to invent our Lord's discourses, or to imagine His supernatural life and love, His divine and majestic form. Even Rousseau acknowledges that such things cannot be the work of any one's imagination; "the stamp of truth is so plain, so astonishing and so inimitable here, that one who could invent such a hero, would be greater than the hero himself." Why should the evangelists write what was untrue? No one lies without some object in view, and it could do them no good to extol their Master at the cost of the truth. They expected Him to give them earthly power, but He died, and they were disappointed. Their preaching and writing could bring them no advantage, on the contrary, they exasperated Jews and Gentiles to such a point that the Apostles were imprisoned and put to death, solely because of their testimony to Christ. False witnesses do not allow themselves to be killed for the sake of their evidence; and this is an additional reason for believing that the evangelists honestly wrote down what they knew to be the truth.

My Brethren, it is foolish or even insane to deny the authenticity of our Gospels; they bear an unmistakable impress of truth, and their trustworthiness is confirmed by the inability of their enemies to disprove it.

When St. Dominic was struggling to convert the Albigenses, the

heretics proposed to consign to the flames their own controversial works and those of St. Dominic. The former were immediately consumed, but the fire did not touch the book in which the saint had defended Catholic truth; on the contrary the flames formed a radiant crown above it, and the astonished spectators were converted. This may be only a pious legend, and not historically true, but there is at any rate one book that has been miraculously preserved, and this is the Bible. It has been subjected to hostile criticism from the first moment of its existence; it has been cast into the fire of doubt and suspicion, and its style, matter and historical statements have been criticized. Yet it has always emerged from the fire unscathed, and each fresh attempt to destroy it has resulted in proving it to be absolutely authentic and trustworthy.

XVII. THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

In the choir of the Church of the Lateran in Rome is a magnificent mosaic, representing our Saviour looking down from Heaven. Below is a symbolical representation of the Holy Ghost; a stream of clear water flows on either side, and beside it grow lofty palms; stags and lambs are quenching their thirst in the water—you know the stream;—it is that of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse, saying: “He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Apoc., xxii, 1). The river is Holy Scripture, and its waters are deep and clear; there is nothing fabulous or legendary in the Bible, as there is in so many other books; each part of it is the work of the man to whom the Church ascribes it, and the text has come down to us pure and uncorrupt. What is written in the Bible is the truth, as we have seen in our last two conferences, and we know that no book in the world is so thoroughly genuine and trustworthy as the Bible as a whole, and the four Gospels in particular; they form the chief part of Holy Scripture, and contain, as it were, the teaching of all the other books.

Whence has the Bible derived this peculiar privilege? And what bestows upon it this exceptional authenticity and trustworthiness? What makes it a holy book? And what causes its waters to be waters of life, able to quench our thirst for truth, to refresh us in the wilderness of this world, and to prosper our efforts to do good? St. John tells us that the river proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This is the reason why the Bible is unlike all other books and stands absolutely alone—it is the work of God, and not merely of man. This divine origin of Holy Scripture is

our subject to-day; may God, who has given us the Bible, bless our study of it.

1. In saying that the Scriptures are God's work, I do not mean that men had nothing to do with their compilation. God called His creatures into existence and in His wisdom He chooses to use their cooperation in all that affects them. Even when His action is direct and independent of the forces of nature, He still employs His creatures in working miracles. You know how He changed water into wine; He could of course have created wine with equal ease; but, instead of doing so, He ordered the servants to fill the waterpots with water, and then changed this water into wine. Of course He could, if He had chosen, have given us a sacred book, written and completed by Himself. But He did not choose to do this, for writing books is the business of human beings, and therefore God, when He desired to communicate His truths to us in a book, employed human beings to write it. They were not however mere machines, writing down what was dictated to them, but they were rational and intelligent men; and God took them as they were. Some, like Matthew and Peter, were plain, simple people; others, like David, Isaias, Luke and Paul, were highly educated and learned men. We can trace these differences in the style and language of the books that God employed them to write. God took them as they were, with the knowledge that they already possessed, and what they knew from other sources, or had seen and heard for themselves, He did not reveal to them. We must remember further that God intended the Scriptures for men of every nation and every age, but primarily for the contemporaries of the men whom He employed. Thus the books of the Old Testament were designed in the first instance for the Jews. Hence He caused the men in

His employ to write in the manner most natural to themselves, and most comprehensible to their immediate readers.

Though she may be a learned woman, a mother, in speaking to her child, uses childish language; and in the same way God stoops to the level of men's understanding, and speaks to them through their fellow men. This consideration explains many things that we otherwise should find difficult. For instance, we see why God, in dealing with the imaginative people of the East, so often employs symbols and parables; why He speaks to the Jews, a carnally minded race, of milk and honey, of the fat of the land and the fruits of the field, and why, although He knew that the earth moves round the sun, He adopted the language current among the people then and now, and allowed Josue to express himself as if the sun moved round the earth. All this becomes intelligible and even obvious, when we bear in mind that God wrote Holy Scripture through human agency and for human beings.

2. Nevertheless Holy Scripture is of divine origin, since God is its author, and He inspired the men, whose names stand at the heading of the various books, to write them. What exactly is the meaning of 'inspired'? It does not mean that God wrote the books Himself, nor that He guided the writer's hands, as a teacher guides a child's, nor that He dictated the actual words; no; God made use of the writers with their abilities and knowledge, but still He inspired them, that is to say, He first chose the men through whom He intended to make His communications, and prompted them to write, so directing their understanding and will, that they wrote down just what God wished to be written, and nothing else. They may have already known the things that God wished written, or God may from time to time have revealed these things to them. After what has been said, it is obvious that God preserved them

from making mistakes as they wrote. The whole matter will appear more intelligible if we imagine a king, who wants to make some important communication to his people. Accordingly he sends for the prime minister or for one of his counsellors to write it down. The king orders this man to write, and tells him what to say, but the minister supplies the words and frames the sentences; yet nevertheless the thoughts are the king's, so what he writes is really the king's utterance. In order, however, that the document may express the king's views fully, and nothing beyond these views, the king watches to see what is being written, to ensure its being a faithful expression of what he intends to say. When the proclamation is composed, it is published all over the country, and received by the inhabitants as emanating from their sovereign. God acts in a similar fashion; He wants to declare His will to the human race, and to do so not merely orally, as when He spoke through the prophets. In His infinite wisdom and love He wishes to commit it to writing, that all may read it. Therefore He summons one of His secretaries, Moses, or Isaias, or Matthew, or Paul, and tells him what is to be made known to mankind. When they have accomplished their task, the books are entrusted to the care of the Church, who gives them to the faithful, and they receive them as indeed the word of God. Since God inspired Holy Scripture, and since all that it contains, proceeds from Him, it follows that nothing but truth can be found in it. There may be mistakes in the manuscripts or in the translations of the Bible, but they are due to human errors, and have nothing to do with the Scriptures themselves. As we have seen, God took the men, whom He chose to write down His communications, just as they were, with all their defects; their language and style might be more elegant, and here and there their statements might be more precise, but absolute

mistakes are plainly impossible. How could there be mistakes on matters of faith, revealed to us by God in Holy Scripture? It is inconceivable—nor are there blunders in the philosophical or historical language used to clothe these doctrines of faith or to elucidate them. In a book like the Bible, written in various languages and under peculiar circumstances, it is not always easy to decide in what sense some particular passage should be understood, whether it is to be interpreted literally or figuratively, or as a parable; but there can never be a mistake in the Bible itself, because it was given us by God, who is incapable of falling into error, or of leading us into it. In this respect Holy Scripture resembles our divine Saviour, who, as St. Paul says, in His sacred humanity resembled us men, even in our weakness; there was only one point of difference, viz. sin, which could not touch Him. So is it with Holy Scripture; any mistake in it would have to be ascribed to God, and therefore none can possibly exist.

3. This is what we mean when we say that Holy Scripture is divinely inspired; but what can we reply, when we are asked how we know it to be really the word of God? Some people, not altogether without reason, say that it is enough to study the book itself, with its majestic simplicity and lofty moral teaching, to be convinced that it must come from God. More than one person, on reading it, has exclaimed, like the disciples at Emmaus, who had talked with our Saviour without recognizing Him: "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke?" There is indeed no book in the world like the Bible, but this is not sufficient to prove with certainty that it is of divine origin. We possess however one testimony that is unimpeachable; God Himself vouches for it. As we have already seen, He gave the Bible to His Church, and she, the infallible teacher of His doctrine, assures us that the Scriptures

are the word of God. She stated this fact emphatically at the Councils of Florence and Trent, and again at the Vatican Council, where she solemnly declared that the books of the Old and New Testaments are to be regarded as sacred and canonical "because they were written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and have God as their author, and as such were entrusted to the Church." Long before the Church defined anything on the subject, two great Apostles had borne testimony to the divine origin of Holy Scripture. St. Paul writes (2 Tim., iii, 16): "All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable"; and St. Peter (1 Peter, i, 21): "The holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost." The Fathers taught the same doctrine most plainly. St. Clement, who was a disciple of the Apostles, calls the Scriptures "divine utterances," "true utterances of the Holy Ghost." Irenaeus says that they were "dictated by God's Spirit." According to Justin Martyr, "the Holy Ghost made use of the writers in order to play to us divine melodies, as upon a lyre." St. Augustine, in reply to the question, "What is Holy Scripture?" says: "It is a letter addressed by Almighty God to His creatures." The same Saint does not hesitate to put it on a level with the most holy Body of Christ. St. Bonaventure expands this idea, when he says: "*Verbum increatum, incarnatum, inspiratum*" — the uncreated Word in the bosom of the Father; the incarnate Word in Christ; the inspired Word contained in Scripture. In another place the same Saint remarks: "Holy Scripture is God's heart, in which He reveals to us His love; it is the mouth of the Father, the tongue of the Son, and the pen of the Holy Ghost."

The Church herself speaks still more loudly and emphatically, and shows the utmost reverence when Holy Scripture is read. Before the Gospel at Mass the priest has to stand in front of the

altar, bending low whilst he beseeches God to purify his heart and lips that he may worthily proclaim the Gospel. After reading it, he stoops to kiss the book in token of deep veneration and ardent love.

At one period the pagans called upon the Christians to surrender their sacred books, knowing how precious they were, and that a surrender of these books involved a denial of God and of the faith. Rather than comply with this demand, the Christians suffered martyrdom. Felix, an African bishop, said: "Before the word of God is cast into the flames, I will be cast into them myself." After Felix had endured imprisonment and bondage for a long time, and had finally spent four days in a ship's hold without food and drink, he was asked on landing: "Why do you not surrender your sacred writings? have you none in your possession?" His reply was: "Certainly I have some, but I will not surrender them." The governor of the town ordered him to be put to death, and he was taken to the place of execution, where he cried out: "I thank Thee, O my God, that during the fifty-six years of my life here below, I have kept my body chaste, have preached the faith and have defended the Gospel." These were his last words (Ruinart, *Acta Martyrum*, p. 390). Is it as great a thing to defend the Gospel as to preserve chastity and preach the faith? The holy bishop seems to think it so, and he is right; in fact, it is a still more glorious thing, since the Gospel is the Word of God, and worthy of the reverence that we owe to Him.

Can you now appreciate Holy Scripture at its real value and understand St. John's words in the Apocalypse and the mosaic picture in the Lateran? Do you see what is represented by the river with the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb—the river on whose banks grow,

flowers and trees of wonderful beauty, and to which the beasts of the forests come to quench their thirst?

Never forget to reverence Holy Scripture as the word of God; never quote it lightly, and never allow others to laugh at it. God gives us His Word for our instruction, admonition, comfort and encouragement. We need no other books, and nothing could ever take its place. Let us say with the author of the Following of Christ: "All scholars may hold their peace, for God alone shall speak to us." Read the Bible regularly and come to hear it expounded in church; treat it with respect. We are told of St. Charles Borromeo that he invariably knelt to read Holy Scripture. Read it with attention and holy desires. In the Following of Christ we are told that two things are necessary for us on our pilgrimage through this world, viz., food and light, both of which are given us by God. We receive food to nourish our souls in the Holy Eucharist, and we find light to guide our steps through the darkness of life in God's holy Word. Food and light! they seem distinct, and yet fundamentally they are one, since both reveal the truth, grace and love of God, the one under the form of bread, the other under that of a written word. Love the Word of God, and read it with devotion, not from mere curiosity; learn from it how to know God's will and how to lead good and holy lives. Ask God to enlighten you, and He will not refuse, for He desires to speak to you through Holy Scripture. Say, in the words of an old prayer: "O Lord Jesus Christ, enlighten my mind that I may understand Thy Word, and derive therefrom true contrition for my sins, and be inspired with fervent devotion. Teach me to turn what I read into heartfelt prayer and an edifying life, for happy is he whom Thou, O Lord, dost instruct in the way of Thy law." Amen.

XVIII. BIBLE AND NATURE

As St. John says, Holy Scripture is a river of living water, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. When we call it of divine origin, we do not mean that it dropped down from Heaven, and contains no human element. The Incarnate Son of God is at once God and Man, and in the same way Holy Scripture is at once divine and human. Being designed by God for men, it was His will that it should be written by men in the manner most natural to them; so He prompted men to write and told them what to say, taking care that their writings should express accurately His divine thoughts. In this sense God may be called the Author of Holy Scripture, and in this sense Holy Scripture is of divine origin; as St. Augustine says, it resembles a letter addressed to men by God, through His secretaries.

The contents of this letter do not find favor with some people, who consequently refuse to accept it, and deny that it comes from God. They regard the Bible as of merely human origin, containing, it is true, many beautiful things, but it is not divine, since, in their opinion, it is not free from errors. If we ask them how they know that there are mistakes in the Bible, they reply that there is another book, undoubtedly proceeding from God; and the statements in this other work—the book of nature, are in many respects at variance with those in the Bible; in fact, there are manifest contradictions between the Bible and nature. “Look up,” they say, “to the stars, whose light takes thousands of years perhaps to reach our eyes; examine the formation of the earth, and the geological strata that require incalculable periods for their formation, and then open your Bible, and read therein how God created earth, sun, moon and stars only about 6,000 years ago, in the space of six days. How

is it possible nowadays to believe this? The conflict between the Bible and nature is inexplicable, and it is impossible to believe that the former contains the Word of God." You have all heard language of this kind and the arguments used by unbelievers against the Bible and the Church. What can we answer? Surely, after what I said just now regarding the divine and human elements in Holy Scripture, you will not be at a loss how to refute these objections. The subject, however, is so important that we must discuss it in some detail, but we may begin by asserting boldly that hitherto no real discrepancy between the Bible and nature has been proved to exist, nor will it be discovered in future, for it is impossible.

1. There can be no real contradiction between the Bible and natural science. You know what the Bible is; the Church has solemnly defined it to be the Word of God, and Christians have always regarded it as such. No one professing to be a Christian can doubt that, being the Word of God, the Bible is true, for God is truth, and can neither lie nor be deceived. Hence it is impossible and inconceivable that there should be mistakes in the Bible. Nature too comes from God, and is, as it were, a book, given us by God. It is indeed a glorious book, and no error can possibly be found in it; its contents are true, and what we read in it actually exists.

If, therefore, we find it recorded in this book that God's creation of the world covered vast periods of time, and if astronomy, geology and palaeontology all tell us the same thing, we know that it must be true, and we cannot doubt it. Some people in their anxiety to uphold the truth, as they understand it, of the Bible, argue thus: "Although from the condition of the earth's interior we learn that, in the ordinary course of affairs, the creation would have covered vast periods of time, it does not follow that this

really was the case, since God, whether He created the universe in six days or in a single moment, could create the various geological strata, that apparently require thousands of years for their formation, and could set in the coal mines the fossil trees with the rings that mark their age. He is almighty and can work miracles." Language of this sort is foolish, for apart from the fact that such miracles would be quite exceptional, the outcome of caprice rather than of God's wisdom and goodness, we are here concerned, as St. Augustine points out, not with discovering miracles and asking how God might have made the earth, but how He actually did make it. There can be no doubt that He made it in the way that we infer from its present form and condition; therefore, if nature asserts this with certainty, He made it, not in a few days, but in the course of ages. What we have said in this particular case is of universal application; the book of nature comes from God, and contains nothing but the truth. The Bible too contains nothing but the truth; one truth cannot contradict another; and what was true once, is true always, for God is truth, and He cannot change. From the fullness of His light He chose to allow two rays to penetrate our minds, one through the Bible, the other through the book of nature. These rays cannot obscure each other; they must necessarily unite and produce a brighter light than either could produce singly. As the Council of Trent solemnly declared, God cannot contradict Himself, nor can one truth conflict with another.

2. But if there is no antagonism between the Bible and natural science, what is the meaning of the objections so often raised by scientific men to the Bible? Although there is no real contradiction, it is quite possible that men may look at the same thing from different points of view, and explain it in ways that are plainly at variance. Supposing some one falls ill and consults a doctor, who

says his digestion is out of order. He consults another physician, who pronounces the malady to be nervous. The case is not unusual, but the doctors disagree, one or other is wrong, or perhaps both are mistaken. In the same way there is no contradiction between knowledge and faith, between science and the Bible, but much depends upon the way in which we understand and explain them. The contradiction lies in the explanations given of the facts; the mistakes are due to the human element, not to the Bible or nature. Does it ever happen that a man makes mistakes in expounding the book of nature? We need not refer to those spurious scientists, who profess to have a little scientific knowledge when they want to attack the faith. As a rule, they know nothing at all. The question is: Do real students of nature ever fall into error? Of course they do; a very superficial acquaintance with the history of natural science will supply us with many instances of mistakes made by genuine scholars. What is proved by all the various attempts made to account for the shape of the earth, the origin of living creatures, the nature of light, etc.? In course of time many facts have been ascertained, but still the history of all these attempts is to a great extent a record of mistakes. Genuine scientists know this perfectly well, and therefore they are modest and diffident in their assertions, and tell us frankly that they may be mistaken, although they have apparently good ground for certainty. Let us now turn to the other side of the question, and ask whether it is possible to go wrong in interpreting the Bible. You know for yourselves, since it is a matter of everyday experience, that those who talk most about contradictions between the Bible and science, betray amazing ignorance of religion and Holy Scripture, for they distort our doctrines and misrepresent the Bible. But do good Christians, who reverence God's word, always interpret it correctly? No, for almost all

heretics have based their teaching on Holy Scripture, and even wise and learned men, who devote themselves to studying the Bible, have fallen into error. Some people have fancied that they were bound as Christians to believe that God created the world in six days of 24 hours each, and that the sun moves round the earth. They were wrong, for these are false statements and by no means the teaching of Holy Scripture.

You see, therefore, that there need be no contradiction between the Bible and science, and that there can be none, since both contain the truth. We human beings, who so often blunder, are responsible for all the apparent contradiction—God is truth, but man is liable to error.

3. Although there is no contradiction between the Bible and nature, we may err in our research into the mysteries of nature; and we may err likewise in our interpretation of Holy Scripture. For us Catholics it is of the utmost importance to avoid misinterpretation, but it is not difficult for us to do so on matters of faith, since we need only consult the Church, to whom God Himself entrusted His Word, and who, being commissioned by Him, expounds it with infallible accuracy. But what can we say regarding other points, which are not precisely matters of faith, especially those containing allusions to scientific subjects, such as frequently occur in Holy Scripture? What rule can we adopt for our guidance so as to avoid error?—First of all, we must not forget that to teach us science formed no part of God's design, when He gave us His revelation in Holy Scripture; He intended to teach us the one thing needful, viz., how to lead good lives and to reach Heaven. St. Augustine writes: "We do not read that our Lord promised to send the Holy Ghost to instruct us regarding the course of the sun and moon; He wished to make us Christians, not mathematicians"

(Augustin. de act. c. Fel. Man. 1, 9). We ought not, therefore, to try to discover secular science in the Bible, nor consult the Church and the Fathers as to the interpretation of it on purely scientific matters, because the Church is commissioned to teach us no other science than that of salvation, and to make us Christians and nothing else. Wherever secular things are mentioned in Holy Scripture, we are free to accept any explanation that seems to us preferable for scientific reasons. St. Thomas remarks on this subject: "The Fathers were also free in this respect. It is a matter of faith that God made the world, and none of them deny it, but they differ in opinion as to the manner in which it was made, and the order in which the various creatures were created, and we too are at liberty to hold different views" (St. Thom., 2 dist. 12 q. 1. a. 2). In order to comprehend Holy Scripture we must observe this rule, and remember that God gave the Bible to men through human agency; hence in it He speaks as men are in the habit of speaking, and in the way most intelligible to those whom He is primarily addressing. St. Jerome points out that "Holy Scripture states many things in accordance with the opinions of the period" (Hieron. in Jerem., 28, 10) and St. Thomas says: "Moses was speaking to an uneducated multitude, and consequently he had to come down to their level, and discuss things more as they appear to be, than as they really are" (S. Thom., 1 q. 70 a. 1 ad 3). Thus in the book of Josue the sun is said to go round the earth, for all Jews thought that it did so, as indeed do most people even at the present day.—It behooves us to be cautious and even to distrust many of the so-called achievements of science; they have not all been proved true, and what is accepted to-day may to-morrow be rejected as false. One thing, however, is certain, a truth cannot be antagonistic to faith. Let us, I repeat, be cautious. St. Augustine complains bit-

terly of the folly of those who appeal to Holy Scripture and religion in support of some opinion that non-Christians plainly perceive to be erroneous. "Fools," he exclaims, "I wish they realized how much sorrow and embarrassment they cause to their more intelligent brethren by their talk!" "What does not with certainty belong to faith," he continues, "and what in our sacred books admits of another interpretation, let us beware of deciding offhand, or indeed at all. Let us beware of hastily adopting an opinion, and especially of trying to base upon our faith or upon Holy Scripture some theory that ultimately proves to be merely our own view, and liable to error" (Augustin. de Gen. ad lit. 1, 37 2 q).

Yes, my brethren, let us be cautious; we owe it to ourselves, our religion and the Bible, and also to those enemies of our faith who would be scandalized by precipitancy on our part. We must be careful not to make mistakes, but this does not mean that we need feel any alarm lest eventually some error should be discovered in Holy Scripture. No, there is no danger of that; Holy Scripture is not in peril. The sun would remain in the heavens, shedding heat and light on the earth, even though some foolish mortals might deny its existence and its beneficial influence; and in the same way Holy Scripture stands firm, imparting light and life to men's minds. All sorts of things have been said and written against it, not only by the ignorant, but also by the learned, in every age since the days of Celsus and Porphyry, but in vain! No one has succeeded in discovering any mistake or statement irreconcilable with the ascertained results of human research. Not long ago, at an assembly of German scientists and physicians, some one said: "In the First Book of Moses we read: 'God said, let there be light, and light was made,' but," added the professor, "light did not dawn upon men, until the sanctity of the Bible was questioned, and it, like every other

book, was regarded as the work of men."—The unhappy man would have done better to abide by chemistry, and not to meddle with theology and philosophy. The greatest men of science have believed in the divine origin of Holy Scripture; Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, Ampère, Agassiz, Lyell, Faraday, Helmholtz, Liebig, Pasteur and Secchi were all believers, and we, who had the honor to be Secchi's pupils, were often at a loss to decide which was most worthy of our admiration,—his profound learning or his child-like faith. Truly great scientists are not unbelievers; they have been well described as witnesses for God in the realm of nature; nor are they enemies of the Bible, for they know that there cannot be a real discrepancy between it and nature. A man, who possesses a mere smattering of scientific knowledge, may be in danger of losing his faith, but those who have studied deeply are led by science to God, the source of all science, as was said by Lord Bacon of Verulam, one of the chief pioneers of scientific research.

To conclude:—The Bible and natural science are sisters, intended to live together in peace and harmony, for both proceed from God, and both ought to lead us to Him who is the truth. Amen.

XIX. BIBLE AND BABEL

When a human being makes a statement, some one else may come forward and deny its truth; but no one can contradict God, who is infinitely wise and truthful. The Bible is His Word, and consequently it is true, now and for ever, although some people have opposed it, and declared that the stars in the sky, the interior of the earth, the evolution of plants and animals and the history of mankind all prove that it contains falsehoods. They say that the world took vast periods of time to come into being, that it has existed for thousands of years; and since the Bible contains a different account of the matter, therefore the Bible is wrong. You heard last time that no real discrepancy is possible between the Bible and the book of nature, because both originate in God. It is, however, quite possible for men to err in reading the book of nature, and to misinterpret the Bible, and then contradictions arise, but men are to blame for them. It is of primary importance for us to accept with the greatest caution scientific statements that are alleged to be at variance with the Bible, and we must not expect to find in the Bible what God does not intend it to teach, remembering St. Augustine's remark that He designed it to make us Christians, and not mathematicians or scientists.

In recent years a certain learned professor in Berlin studied the cuneiform inscriptions on bricks and tiles discovered in burial places near the Euphrates and Tigris, where for more than 2,000 years the mighty cities of Ninive and Babylon have lain in ruins. The professor, Delitzsch is his name, tried to prove that these records were of an earlier date than the Bible, and that the Bible repeated things that had been known in Babylon, that consequently these facts were not divinely revealed, and that, therefore, the Bible

is not the Word of God. The professor's theory was hailed with enthusiasm by the opponents of Christianity, who thought that he had finally disposed of the Bible—but this is by no means the case. The Bible is God's Word, and will last for ever. But you have a right to ask how matters stand with this theory. It is difficult to give a brief answer, for volumes have been written on the subject; nor is it easy to make my answer simple and intelligible to everyone, for a vast amount of learning has been displayed in dealing with this theory, but, if you will listen attentively, I will try to make you understand it.

1. Have you ever heard of the *Denderah zodiac*? It is fairly ancient history, but we shall do well to recall it. The zodiac is, as you know, the circle which the sun apparently makes in the course of a year, the parts of which are named the "signs" of the zodiac. During Napoleon's Egyptian campaign a representation of the zodiac was discovered in the temple at Denderah, in Egypt. Learned men who examined it proceeded to determine its date. Some assigned it to a period 1,000 B. C.; others said 2,000; others 4,000, and one even thought 15,000 was nearer the mark. This seemed to dispose of the Bible, according to which only about 4,000 years elapsed between Adam and Christ. But in the midst of the exultation over the alleged discovery of an error in the Bible, other scholars came forward to prove that the zodiac in question was not particularly ancient, and far from dating back to a period thousands of years B. C., it, like the temple in which it was found, belonged to the Christian era, as was conclusively proved by an inscription, previously overlooked, in the colonnade of the temple. Alas, what a crushing blow for our adversaries!

There is another story about Egypt that is rather amusing. We read in Genesis that camels formed part of the offering made by

the Egyptian king to Abraham. Some learned Egyptologist doubted whether camels existed in Egypt, and declared that there was no mention at all of a camel in all the hieroglyphs that have come down to us; therefore, he argued, there were no such animals in the country at that time. Consequently the Bible must be wrong, at least the book, which contains an allusion to camels, must be of much later date. Again, people smiled contemptuously at the Bible, until in some recent excavations an extremely ancient tomb was discovered, in which was found a vessel shaped in the form of a camel kneeling down to receive its load. No one knows precisely how old this vessel is, but some assign it to 4,000 B. C. This "prehistoric camel," as it is called, can be seen in the Egyptian Museum of Berlin. We may, therefore, point to the Denderah zodiac and to the prehistoric camel, when people talk about other discoveries said to contradict the Bible. We are not bound to believe blindly all that modern scholars say about the significance, or the age, of recently discovered cuneiform inscriptions at Babylon. It is quite possible for them to be mistaken. Until a comparatively short time ago, no one could read these inscriptions, and while much has been accomplished by the genius and industry of scholars, the interpretation is still uncertain, and the best scholars acknowledge that there is still much obscurity and many difficulties. To give you one instance of them, let me mention that in our languages we use some 25 or 26 letters, but the Assyrian-Babylonian script employs no less than 600 different signs, and 20,000 groups of signs or letters. How easily a misinterpretation may occur! Moreover, many of these signs denote sometimes a syllable, sometimes a whole word. How difficult it must be to read them correctly!

But even if we take it for granted that our scholars have made no mistakes and have read the inscriptions accurately, how are we

to know that the facts recorded are true? You have seen that it is possible to misread even the book of nature, although its contents cannot be false. In the case of ancient inscriptions, we are not justified in assuming them to be invariably true; they are the work of human beings, who are liable to error. Why should we place implicit faith in the ancient Babylonians? Nations with the unbridled imagination of the East are not particularly trustworthy. Exaggerations and misstatements have been shown to exist in their cuneiform inscriptions, and no one is bound to believe them. It is a sad fact that many learned men, while accusing us of credulity, are themselves extremely credulous. They are ready enough to doubt what they read in the Bible, and to declare it untrue, although it is God's Word; they think that thus they are acting scientifically and without bias; but if they catch sight of some ancient manuscript or stone inscription, they are carried away by enthusiasm, and proceed with the utmost assurance to decipher them, and welcome the information thus obtained as most certainly true. Let them do as they please; we are less credulous, and feel a wholesome distrust of new discoveries that are supposed to overthrow the Bible.

2. Let us now return to Professor Delitzsch. His theory affects both, historical events recorded in the Bible, such as the Creation and the Deluge, and also its religious and ethical teaching. He believes it possible to show from the cuneiform inscriptions, that there were many points of resemblance between the Babylonian religion and that of the Bible, only the former was earlier and more perfect; hence, he argues, the Bible is not the word of God. There are undoubtedly points of resemblance; but there are also points of difference, which Delitzsch ignores. But why should there not be many points of resemblance? Did all the knowledge

possessed by mankind after their expulsion from Paradise perish from among their descendants? When Abraham quitted his home in Babylonia, did he carry with him none of the knowledge that was an inheritance common to the race? Human nature is the same everywhere, so we need not be surprised if everywhere similar religious views and moral laws prevail.

"But," says Delitzsch, "the Babylonian records are older than the Bible." It has been clearly proved that this is not universally true; some of them may be older, but what of it? As you know, the Bible does not consist solely of revelations regarding things previously unknown. Moses and the other authors may already have known much of what they wrote, and may have derived their knowledge either from some primitive revelation or elsewhere, possibly from Egypt, where Moses was educated, and possibly also from Babylonia, whence Abraham had come. This proves nothing at all against the Bible, which proceeds from God, not from Egypt or Babylonia, and it was God who prompted Moses and the others to write. But what can be said in answer to the assertion that the Babylonian version is better, purer, more perfect, than that given by the Bible? If I were to read you what these Babylonian records say about the Creation, and the fall of man, how the gods gather like flies about the freshly slain sacrifice, how they quarrel with goddesses, how they drink until intoxicated, etc., you would either feel disgusted or you would burst out laughing. Compare all this with the dignified simplicity of the Bible: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And God said: Be light made. And light was made. And God saw that it was good."

Delitzsch fancies that the Babylonian conception of the Godhead was peculiarly perfect; but I have just told you about these queer deities, and it is difficult to see how, nevertheless, they be-

lieved in one true God. Still, if they did so, it proves nothing against the Bible, it only shows that they had preserved this particular belief. There is, however, no evidence that they believed in the unity and sanctity of God; on the contrary, they seem to have lapsed into a debased kind of polytheism, and it was in order to protect Abraham from this that God bade him go forth from his country, his kindred and his father's house.

Lastly, a comparison is drawn between the moral teaching of the Babylonians and that of the Bible. Human nature did not become utterly corrupt after the fall, and the moral law is written in man's conscience, which tells him what is right and what is wrong; and no one is so degraded as to be incapable of doing anything good. Moses has been compared with the Babylonian legislator Hammurabi, who was a contemporary of Abraham, and it is suggested that Moses simply copied Hammurabi. The latter's laws contain much that is commendable on the subject of right and justice, and, as I have pointed out, this is not surprising. The two codes differ, nevertheless, very greatly. For instance, Hammurabi speaks of marriage as a purely secular contract, Moses regards it as sanctified by religion; Hammurabi sanctions the intermarriage of near relatives, Moses forbids it. Hammurabi imposes no penalty upon incest, Moses condemns offenders to death. If we look at the worship of God, man's higher duty, what do we find? The Babylonians prayed and offered sacrifice to their gods, but their whole worship was a mass of magic, witchcraft and superstition. To the Israelites, on the contrary, God said through Moses: "The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers . . . I will set my face against that soul, and destroy it out of the midst of its people" (Levit., xx, 6). Many years afterward, when the Jews were in danger of being infected with the vices of Babylon, the

prophets lifted up their voices and cried: "Hearken not to diviners and dreamers and soothsayers and sorcerers" (Jer., xxvii, 9).

Here lies the great difference between the Bible and Babylon. One is like a serene summer day, on which the sun shines brightly; the other is a cloudy night, with here and there a star to pierce the darkness. Anyone who, after comparing the two, prefers Babylon, must be overhasty in his judgment. The excavations and discoveries near the Tigris and Euphrates have proved nothing against the Bible, but rather the reverse. Those silent stones, picked up here and there, bear testimony to it. The Bible does not need their evidence, for God requires no witness. Yet we may call upon those very inscriptions as witnesses for the Bible. Vigouroux, a French explorer, has written a work in which he shows how the statements made by the writers of the Bible are confirmed and elucidated by recent discoveries in Palestine, Egypt and Assyria. We have already heard about "the prehistoric camel";—here is another, somewhat similar instance. In the book of Genesis there are references to grapes, wine, and Pharaoh's cupbearer. Critics have pointed out that Herodotus and Plutarch both deny that wine was made in Egypt; consequently, say the critics, the Bible is wrong. But recently, in burial chambers in the pyramids, representations have been discovered of vines, and of the treading of the wine-press; they are so clear that no one could possibly fail to recognize them. Again, doubts were cast upon the tasks imposed upon the Israelites in Egypt, but now pictures have been found showing men engaged in brick making and their overseers; we seem to be able to watch the Israelites at work. There are many other instances to which I might refer, but it is unnecessary—God and the Bible have no need of human testimony, yet the testimony exists, and it is all in support of the Bible.

XX. THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

Three wise men once came from the East, i. e., as many people think, from the region of the Euphrates and Tigris. Guided by a star, they came to Bethlehem, and adored a new-born Infant, offering Him myrrh, gold and frankincense. The myrrh signified that they recognize Him as man, subject to death; the gold that they honored Him as king; the frankincense that they worshipped Him as God. On the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris, in what was formerly Babylonia, all sorts of discoveries have been made recently; the inscriptions on bricks and tiles have been compared with the Bible, and our opponents have exclaimed in triumph, that the Bible was copied from Babylonian records, and that, therefore, Babel was greater than the Bible. I showed you last time how foolish and overhasty such statements were, and that no genuine scholar could possibly subscribe to them. Long before the Babylonian inscriptions were discovered, we knew and acknowledged that the Bible was written for men through the agency of men, who no doubt already were aware of much that they recorded, having learnt it from some primitive revelation or tradition, or through Abraham's bringing it from Babylonia to Canaan, or through Moses, who was educated in Egypt. In this sense the Bible is of human origin; no other book, however, approaches it in the majesty and sanctity of its teaching; it surpasses all the rest, even the code of Hammurabi the Babylonian, who so suddenly became famous. It is easy enough to account for its superiority, which is due to the influence of the Holy Spirit, since the men, who wrote the Bible, wrote under the inspiration and with the assistance of God. Outwardly the Child at Bethlehem resembled other children, although He was in reality divine, and the fullness of the God-

head dwelt in Him; and, in the same way, Holy Scripture is in very truth God's word, and, therefore, divine and worthy of all reverence. Such is the doctrine of the Church and our own belief regarding the Bible, and all arguments against it are futile.

One more objection, however, is sometimes brought forward, and people say: "If the Bible is divine, and really contains God's word, and is, as it were, a letter addressed by Him to mankind, why does not the Catholic Church set a higher value on Bible reading and recommend it more emphatically? Has she not more than once expressly forbidden it? Why was the Bible practically unknown before the 16th Century, when it was rediscovered and placed in the hands of Christians?"—These questions need an answer.

1. The Church is said to have forbidden Bible reading;—is this really the case? No, she has never done so, and any one, who makes such an assertion, ought to state precisely when, where and by whom the alleged prohibition was issued. No one can do this, for the simple reason that no such prohibition exists. On the contrary, the Church more than once, more even than a hundred times, has recommended the study of the Bible, and attached indulgences to it. It is true that she has often regulated the manner in which this study was to be conducted, and we shall soon see why she made these regulations.

In 1199 the Bishop of Metz wrote to Pope Innocent III., telling him that in his diocese a number of the faithful had caused the Bible to be translated into French, and read this translation at their secret assemblies, where even laymen and women expounded it, and refused to listen to the priests' remonstrances. The Pope thought respect for Holy Scripture highly commendable, but condemned this proceeding as quite irregular.—About 1400 Wyclif tried to circulate a bad translation of the Bible in England, and

taught that God had commanded every individual to read Holy Scripture. The bishops in England protested against Wyclif's action.—As late as the year 1519 Luther wrote to the Pope: "In they voice, most holy Father, I recognize the voice of Christ"; but when the Pope refused to countenance his heretical teaching, Luther became an apostate, and in 1530 declared that Holy Scripture, not the Church, was the source and rule of faith. This doctrine led to Luther's condemnation.—You see therefore that these heretics believed Holy Scripture to be, not only sufficient, but indispensable to salvation, and considered it possible and obligatory for each man to derive his own faith from its pages. Moreover some translations were not trustworthy, and the Church, being opposed to all exaggeration, and the divinely appointed guardian of truth, could not let such dangers and disastrous errors pass unnoticed. No one however can assert that when she protested against error, she condemned Holy Scripture or the legitimate use of the same. There are laws controlling the use of articles of food, but they do not forbid us to eat; and the laws regulating the sale of intoxicants are an excellent instance of what I mean.—So are the laws against adulteration, which certainly are not the outcome of any failure to appreciate the importance of good food.—What I want you to understand is this: The Bible is a most valuable source of divine revelation, but it is not the only one, nor does it contain everything that we are bound to believe. A book, not being alive, cannot direct our faith, and Christ appointed as our guide a living teacher. He sent out His apostles to preach and instruct all nations, and St. Paul declares that faith cometh by preaching and by listening to the word of God. The Church is bound to take action, not against the Bible, but against those who accept no authority but that of the

Bible, and thus wrongly employ it as an instrument for the destruction of Christianity, as understood by Christ.—The Bible is by no means indispensable to every individual. It was written for the benefit of all, but this does not mean that everyone ought to read it. You all benefit by the laws of your country, but you are not bound to read and study the laws for yourselves; very few of you would take the trouble to do so. Long before the books of the New Testament were generally known, millions were converted to Christianity. Tertullian writes: "Christ did not say to the man sick of the palsy: 'Bible-reading hath made thee whole,' but: 'Thy faith hath made thee whole'" (*De praescript.* 14). St. Ambrose speaks of the Bible as a book for priests. St. Augustine says that it was entrusted to priests and bishops, in order that they might instruct others (*De doct. chr.* 1. 39). The Church in every age has insisted that those, whose duty it is to teach others, are bound not only to read, but to study and meditate upon Holy Scripture, and make it their own, by imbibing its spirit. If you were to visit a seminary and look at the syllabus, you would find more than one professor appointed to expound Holy Scripture. In the lectures on doctrine you would always hear reference made to the Bible, and as a rule such references are discussed very fully. The Church has always been careful that the Bible shall be studied; she has even instituted the office of Lector or Reader, one of the Minor Orders, for this purpose, and at his ordination she hands to the Deacon the book of the Gospels, a beautiful symbol of his holy office, whilst she lays it even on the head and shoulders of a bishop. The Breviary and Missal consist for the most part of extracts from Holy Scripture. The Church undoubtedly values the Bible very highly, but she does not make it a monopoly for the priests; she wishes us to study it

for your sake and for your advantage. You can adopt the words that St. Paul used of Timothy, and say that from childhood you have known Holy Scripture. As little children you were told about Paradise, the fall of man, Joseph the patriarch, the holy Child Jesus, and our Saviour's Passion. Every Sunday you hear the Gospel for the day, and the principal sermon is bound, according to rules laid down by the Council of Trent, to be an explanation of the Gospel; in fact every sermon is based on Holy Scripture. It is precisely because the Church desires her children to enjoy the benefits of Holy Scripture, that she guards it with such jealous care. No more ardent lover of the Bible ever lived than St. Jerome, who writes thus to Laeta: "May thy daughter delight in the Psalms, and never lay aside the Gospel; may she esteem manuscripts of our sacred books above jewels and silken garments." Nevertheless the saint was far from willing that every chance person should expound the Bible. He exclaims indignantly: "Only a carpenter understands carpentry; only a physician practices the art of healing, and shall every crazy man, every talkative woman, every wordy sophist, everyone, in short, indiscriminately expound Holy Scripture, without having learnt it?" (*Hieron. ad Paulin. Ep.* 53, 7). Such is the opinion of the Church also; she cherishes a tender affection, but, at the same time, a profound reverence for Holy Scripture, and combines these feelings with motherly care for her children's welfare. She does not allow anyone to touch the Lord's Body in the Blessed Sacrament, save those whose hands are consecrated; and in the same way, she allows none to expound Holy Scripture save those whose lips have been cleansed as with a glowing coal, and to whom Christ Himself has said: "Go and teach all nations."

2. But, it may be asked, how was it that, if the Church venerated

Holy Scripture so profoundly, it had become an unknown book, and had to be rediscovered by the so-called Reformers of the 16th Century? Luther declared that for centuries the Bible had lain under the bench, whence he himself brought it to light. The same language is often heard at the present day, but there is no more truth in it than in that other assertion that, at the time of the Vatican Council in 1870, no Bible could be found in Rome, except in the house of a Protestant Chaplain. This assertion is so absolutely absurd that we need not waste time in discussing it, and Luther's remark is equally ridiculous; it is in fact one of those "thumping lies," in which Luther tells us he indulged, when it suited him. No sooner had he uttered it and produced his translation, than Zwingli, a Swiss reformer, whose testimony was certainly beyond suspicion, asked: "But did not others, men such as Erasmus and Valla, precede you? What could you have accomplished without them? I will spare you, my dear Luther, but you really deserve to be well flogged." What about the 400 editions printed in the 50 odd years between the invention of printing and Luther's translation? In High German there were fourteen and in Low German four complete editions of the Bible, besides numerous editions of separate books. A Protestant scholar like Bunsen frankly admits Luther's translation to be the most inaccurate of all. Emendation is required in 3000 places, and the worst feature in his work is that he has deliberately falsified the text, in order to foist upon it his own heretical doctrines. For instance, where St. Paul says that we are justified by faith, Luther does not hesitate to interpolate the word "alone," so that the passage reads: by faith alone. When this falsification was pointed out to him, he fell, as usual, into a violent rage, and said: "Doctor Martin Luther intends it to stand thus, and declares a papist and an ass

to be one and the same thing; I will have it so; my will is law." Later on, he took still further liberties with it, and where it was not in agreement with his doctrines, he simply said that he did not care about it at all. He rejected the Epistle of St. James, and called it "the Epistle of straw," because in it the Apostle speaks clearly of the necessity of good works. Luther's successors have only acted consistently in going still further, in denying the inspiration of the Bible, and in rejecting passages and books as spurious, until finally very little is left except the cover, although meantime they continue to swear by the Bible and to find fault with us for not appreciating it. Whoever hears what they say, and is satisfied to accept them at their own valuation, may really suppose that non-Catholics respect the Bible very highly. They spend large sums of money and display great zeal in printing and distributing it. On March 5th, 1904, they celebrated the Jubilee of the so-called Bible Societies, and it was then announced that the "British and Foreign Bible Society," founded in 1804, had in 1902 an income of £250,000 or 1,250,000 dollars. During the hundred years of its existence it had distributed 181 million copies of the Bible in more than 350 languages and dialects, at a cost of over £13,000,000. At the jubilee celebration there was a great children's festival in London, at which 12,000 children were present, who feasted on eight cwt. of dainties, in addition to which there was an enormous cake, weighing 1 cwt., adorned with the inscription: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." All this was considered very imposing, and we might rejoice over such a display of zeal and respect for Holy Scripture, did not many sorrowful thoughts obtrude themselves, and suggest the questions: "How many heathens have really become good Christians as a result of all this expenditure? Is this ostensible reverence for the Bible

genuine? Is it true that the word of God has not passed away from the countries where the Bible Societies flourish?" Any candid observer would have to confess that it has indeed passed away, like the cake and the dainties consumed by the children at the Jubilee. What an irony of fate! Luther is said to have rediscovered the Bible, but among the Protestant theologians who are his followers, few still believe in it. Most of them look upon it as not divine, and the few who still cling to it, are deeply pained at the manner in which their colleagues treat Holy Scripture. When in 1893 the Holy Father issued his magnificent encyclical on the Bible, an Anglican loudly proclaimed his delight and gratitude, extolling the encyclical as a splendid and courageous confession of faith in the midst of a world of science and unbelief, and he went on to point out what he considered a remarkable change of policy, inasmuch as Protestants of all denominations were disparaging the Bible, and doing their best to undermine all faith in it, whilst the Pope in Rome came forward declaring it to be divine and free from error, thus reviving hope in hearts that were on the point of breaking. This is an interesting statement, but the Anglican writer is mistaken in thinking that there has been any change of policy on the part of Rome. Leo XIII. held precisely the same views as all his predecessors; the Popes and the Catholic Church have ever been the watchful guardians of Holy Scripture; they have respected it, believed in it, and insisted upon its divine origin.

If ever you have been present at a solemn High Mass, you must have seen before the Gospel the deacon bending low in prayer, then he takes the book from the altar, chants the heading, and makes the sign of the cross on his brow, mouth and breast. The faithful stand up, and the deacon takes the censor and incenses thrice the book of the Gospels, just as the Blessed Sacrament is incensed,

because what he is about to read is God's Word. You see with what respect the Church treats the Gospel. When you stand to hear it, make the sign of the cross on your brow in token that you will always believe it as it is interpreted by Holy Church; make the same sign on your lips and promise that you will always profess your faith in it before men; and lastly make the sacred sign on your breast, and pledge yourselves to live in conformity with the teaching of God's holy Word. Thus will Holy Scripture be to you a source of comfort, joy and blessing. It may happen that our hearts are troubled by doubts and fears, and then we shall find peace in the Word of God. Lacordaire, the famous Dominican, was in early life tormented by doubts regarding the faith. Afterwards he was asked what he had done, and what books he had read, in order to get rid of them. He replied that one day, whilst reading the Gospel, he realized its beauty, and was so deeply touched that tears filled his eyes; he wept, and thenceforth had faith.

My Brethren, be diligent in hearing and reading the word of God; the Church as a loving mother offers you this divine book and rejoices when you read it in the right way; that is to say, with the cross on your brow, in token of humble faith; with the cross on your lips, as a proof of courage to confess your faith; and with the cross on your breast and in your heart, as a pledge of your determination to lead a Christian life. Amen.

XXI. TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF FAITH

We have seen that Holy Scripture is a book of divine origin, written for men through human agency, but God prompted the authors to write and inspired them with what they were to say; He therefore speaks to us in Holy Scripture.—But does the Bible contain the whole of God's revelation? is it the only source whence we learn His truths? and are we consequently bound to believe nothing but what we find in it? These questions are answered in the affirmative by the followers of those who in the 16th century cut themselves off from the Catholic Church. Before the Reformation all Christians would have answered them in the negative, as Catholics still do. The great Council of Trent and the Vatican Council both plainly declared the Bible not to be the sole rule of faith, since "supernatural revelation is contained in the written books of Holy Scripture, and in traditions that are not written, but were learnt by the apostles from the lips of Christ, or were handed down from the apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and so have come down to us." These traditions may have been recorded in writing, but they do not occur in Holy Scripture. We find them in the works of the Fathers, on the walls of the catacombs, in the decisions of councils, and in the prayers, hymns and customs of the Church, and they are divine truths. Therefore Holy Scripture is not the only source of our faith, but, in making this admission, we do not detract from the reverence due to it. On the contrary, we look upon the Bible as a divine book, and we certainly honor it more than do those who talk a great deal about it, and believe that it contains the whole of God's revelation. Whilst we revere the Bible, we must still cling to the truth, especially with regard to those fundamental matters on which Christianity and our own salvation depend. The

truth is that the Bible does not contain all that God chose to reveal to us; tradition also is a source of revealed truth.

1. A man who makes an important assertion, must not expect to be believed off-hand, especially if what he asserts is something new and previously unknown. It is his business to prove what he declares to be true. Now, Protestants say that Holy Scripture contains the whole of God's revelation, but can they prove it? All Christians agree that revealed truths are found in the Bible, but that *all* the truths ever revealed by God to man are to be found in it, was a new doctrine, which Protestants have been trying in vain to prove for the last three hundred years. Only one kind of proof would be satisfactory.—Since it is with them an article of faith that the Bible contains all revealed truths, every article of faith must necessarily be found in the Bible, and consequently they ought to be able to prove from the Bible that it contains the whole of God's revelation. But they cannot do this, and thus they contradict themselves. We are justified in arguing with them in this way: You tell us that we ought to believe nothing that is not in Holy Scripture. Now it is nowhere stated in Holy Scripture that the Bible is the sole source of revealed truth; therefore you ought not to believe it. Since you do believe it, you are flatly contradicting yourselves.—Again: *We* know that Holy Scripture contains the Word of God, because tradition and the Church tell us that it is so; but how do you Protestants know it? How do you prove it? According to your own theory you ought to prove it from the Bible; but where, for instance, will you find it stated that the Gospel according to St. Matthew forms part of Holy Scripture and contains the Word of God? It is not stated anywhere in the Bible, therefore you cannot prove it; and if you cannot prove it, how can you believe it? Is this not another instance of self-contradiction?—A Catholic scholar

once made a Protestant grasp this fact by using the following device: The Protestant was speaking against tradition, so the Catholic asked for a copy of the Bible, and turned over the pages, first of the Old, and then of the New Testament. Finally he handed the book back, saying: "I want a copy of Holy Scripture, and not this fabulous book."—"But that is a copy of Holy Scripture," replied the Protestant. "Is it?" said the Catholic, "how do you know that it is?"—"How do I know? Why, I have the testimony of our forefathers, who from age to age, from generation to generation, have regarded and revered this book as Holy Scripture." "A capital answer," cried the Catholic, "you know it not from the Bible itself, but from oral tradition." Nothing could be said against this argument; Protestants are quite unable to prove that the Bible contains the whole of God's Word, or that it contains it at all, and their teaching on the subject is most contradictory, whereas our faith is, as St. Paul says, reasonable, and we cannot be forced to believe such senseless and contradictory statements. Hence we shall never believe that we are bound to accept *only* what we find in the Bible.

2. It is difficult to see how any one could have supposed that God, in making his revelation, had limited Himself to His written word. It seems, humanly speaking, not even probable, when we think of Christ and the apostles. Our Lord was of course acquainted with the Old Testament; He quoted it frequently, and more than once bade His hearers search the scriptures. But He appealed to it only in support of His oral teaching, and He never wrote anything. He, the God who made the revelation, knew best how to proceed, and, realizing the force of the living word, regarded written documents as subsidiary to speech. He travelled about with His disciples, and, as the evangelists tell us, He opened his mouth and taught the multitude. The words of Divine love and wisdom flowed

from His lips, and were eagerly received by His hearers, enlightening their minds and inflaming their hearts. He stood face to face with those whom He was addressing, and instructed them by means of the spoken, not the written, word. And, what was more, He charged the apostles to do likewise; they were to go all over the world, teaching all nations, and St. Mark tells us that they "preached everywhere." At first they had no idea of writing, although ere long, they were moved by the Holy Ghost to write. Still, even then they had no intention of writing down all that Christ had taught and the Holy Ghost revealed to them. In compliance with the desire and request of the faithful, they recorded the chief of His discourses and acts, in order that these might not be forgotten, when those who had known Him personally passed away. After all, not very much was written—only the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and the evangelists were far from intending to give a complete account of their Master's life; on the contrary, St. John says at the end of his Gospel: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."—We have also the epistles, *i. e.*, letters written by the apostles as occasion offered, often in reply to some definite questions put to them, but certainly not with any idea of recording all that Christians were bound to observe and believe. St. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, says: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle" (2 Thess., ii, 14). The great St. John Chrysostom, whose own love and reverence for Holy Scripture knew no bounds, remarks, in commenting on this passage: "The words 'Hold the traditions' show that the Apostles did not transmit everything to us in writing, but taught much without writing. This too deserves our belief; it is a

tradition, and that suffices." St. John, the beloved disciple, in his second epistle, admonishes his followers to "continue in the doctrine of Christ," and adds: "Having more things to write unto you, I would not by paper and ink; for I hope that I shall be with you, and speak face to face." Remember these words: not by paper and ink, but face to face.

This then was Christ's method, and the apostles adopted it from Him. Many thousands were converted to Christianity before a word of the New Testament was written, and since then millions, most of them unable to read, have received the faith simply through the spoken word. We take up our stand with Christ, the Apostles, and the millions of Christians who have preceded us, and we, like them, proclaim loudly and solemnly, that, though Holy Scripture is glorious and Divine, it does not contain all that we are required to believe, and is not the sole source of our faith.

3. Holy Scripture certainly does not contain the whole of God's revelation, and it is a remarkable fact that those who profess to regard it as the sole source of their faith, nevertheless accept many truths and precepts as emanating from Christ, in spite of their not occurring in the Bible. It is impossible to prove from the Bible either which books ought to be included in it, or that Holy Scripture as a whole is inspired and divine. No wonder the Protestants, who reject tradition and yet wish to be logical, have to a great extent abandoned the doctrine regarding the divine origin of Holy Scripture.—Most Protestants agree with us in thinking that infants can receive valid baptism, yet there is nothing about it in the Bible, and one passage seems opposed to it. Our Lord ordered His disciples to teach and baptize, which looks as if those only could be baptized who were capable of previous instruction. The Baptists and Men-

nonites therefore are quite consistent in rejecting infant baptism.—Again, where is it stated in Holy Scripture that baptism by sprinkling is valid? What does it tell us about the administration of the Holy Eucharist? Does it not explicitly enjoin the washing of feet? Does it not forbid the eating or drinking of blood? Are not oaths apparently prohibited? And is not the Sabbath required to be observed? Only a few Protestants, such as the Mennonites, consider themselves bound by all these laws; whence do all the rest learn that they have ceased to be binding? We Catholics know well enough; as St. John Chrysostom says: “It is a tradition”; and on these points we interpret Holy Scripture by the light of tradition; but how can those, who reject tradition, believe and act quite otherwise than Holy Scripture seems to demand? If they gave an honest answer to this question, they would be forced to confess that there are doctrines and laws, really taught by Christ, that cannot with certainty be shown to exist in the Bible, and that we know only from tradition; and there is also more than one passage in the Bible quite inexplicable without the aid of tradition. Thus Protestants really agree with us in denying the Bible to be the sole source of faith, and in recognizing tradition, *i e.*, the truths which the Apostles learnt from our Saviour or through the Holy Ghost, and which have remained from generation to generation in the religious consciousness of Christians. We believe that a recognition of tradition is essential to Christianity, and in accordance with the designs of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not quite correct to say that Holy Scripture and tradition stand side by side; both are necessary, but this is not an accurate account of their relation to each other. Faith is sometimes called an edifice and God Himself compares revealed religion with a house, the foundation of which is Christ. The house seems to consist of

two stories, of which the lower is tradition and the upper is Holy Scripture. The upper story may be more attractive, but the lower is more necessary, since it supports the other. Protestantism ignored the lower, and tried to inhabit only the upper story, and the inevitable result followed; as soon as the lower was undermined, the upper fell with it, and hence many even of the wisest men, who profess to teach and guide others, now deny Holy Scripture to be the Word of God. We, Catholics, however, accept the house as God gave it to us; we inhabit both stories, but chiefly the lower, for it is clear that without tradition there can be no Christianity and no Holy Scripture; though we are far from undervaluing the upper story in which God speaks to us directly in His inspired books. Those of us who have to instruct others go up daily to the upper story to breathe the pure air of heaven and listen to God's voice. But we shall never be so foolish as to try to alter the house that He designed; we shall beware of making violent changes, as others have done, in its lower story. On the contrary, we shall dwell contentedly on this more humble, but safer and more convenient level, and with obedience and faith accept what God's Holy Church teaches us about Him. Amen.

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